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Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.000131dd>

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**Christopher Michael Grey**

A theological aesthetic of musical beauty, drawing on the notion of poetic knowledge in the work of Jacques Maritain (1882-1973)

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Music and Philosophy**

**The Open University**

Research supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council  
through the CHASE Doctoral Training Partnership

June 2021

## Abstract

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study in theological aesthetics, integrating philosophy and music. It addresses musical beauty ontologically, and in particular how the cognition of beauty relates to the genesis of a musical work. The French philosopher Jacques Maritain is neglected outside Catholic philosophical tradition, yet within his oeuvre is a well-developed, sophisticated theory of art that speaks to the same kind of questions, mostly as they relate to poetry and painting. As regards music, his theory is allusive. Maritain was the foremost champion of Saint Thomas Aquinas in the twentieth century, and Thomistic thought and method permeates his aesthetics. The epistemological divergence from post-enlightenment theories which this represents is underscored throughout the thesis.

Following a short introductory essay, the study explores musical sound in selected writings from the mid-Patristic period; the Fathers of East and West providing an aesthetic benchmark for those that came after, including Aquinas. This is followed by an exposition of Maritain's revolutionary *Art and Scholasticism*, in which all references to music are collated, and basic themes of a Thomistic philosophy of music are articulated. The first half of the thesis ends with a chapter proposing how the creation of a work might be construed in terms of existence and Being.

The three chapters in the latter half of the thesis are a speculative interpretation of Maritain's *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*. They aim to construct the realist account of musical creation and apprehension which Maritain infers a musician should undertake. At its heart lies a form of knowing that is perceptual, congenial, and even non-conceptual. Poetic knowledge exemplifies the experience of musical beauty and it is the closest artistic analogate to theological knowing. The thesis draws extensively on the writing of composers and incorporates reflection and analyses of musical works.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis arose from circumstances which were not planned or welcome at the time. But God moves in mysterious ways and often very quickly. He mostly works through people, all of whom mentioned below have been instrumental in bringing it to completion. My supervisory team of Dr Martin Clarke and Professor Sophie-Grace Chappell have supported, guided and challenged me in more ways than I can mention. They have gone above and beyond, and I cannot thank them enough. At every stage, the Open University has provided an excellent student experience. Nothing has been too much trouble.

Throughout this study, new people have enriched my life. They are too numerous to name, but I will mention those in the American Maritain Association who have welcomed this apprentice Thomist as one of their own and tolerated me 'breaking a few windows' at their esteemed annual meetings. To John Trapani most especially, whose enthusiasm, hospitality and friendship has motivated and inspired me, my sincerest thanks. Hopefully I've not trampled too badly on your meticulous scholarship! Some people who instigated my love for music and beauty are no longer with us. They are mostly unnamed but very much alive in my thoughts and words. Others have fostered that love and fanned the flame. Colin Durrant, my MA supervisor many years ago, who made aesthetics feel alive, and my own colleagues and students in music departments who have shown me how to educate 'aesthetically,' I am grateful for all of you.

However, it is my family who have been closest to this work and who have shown me that there is nothing more beautiful than a human soul. My parents have steadfastly supported in numerous ways, all the while enduring challenging circumstances of their own. But it is Liz, my radiant wife of twenty-six years and our six delightful children; Jessica, Rebecca, Sarah, Aaron, Joel and Isobel-Maria, who have accompanied me daily through this intense chapter in our lives. Liz above all, has been constantly patient and an unwavering source of calmness. In fact, the opposite of me, which is just as well. She has endured much, so I have no hesitation and great joy in dedicating this thesis to her.

To anyone who stumbles across this work, I commend Jacques Maritain. I think the words of Josef Ratzinger (for whom I am also thankful) describe Maritain eloquently.

"The only really effective apologia for Christianity comes down to two arguments, namely, the saints the Church has produced and the art which has grown in her womb. Better witness is borne to the Lord by the splendor of holiness and art which have arisen in the community of believers than by the clever excuses which apologetics has come up with."

Lastly, because I promised the youngest philosopher in our family that I would quote her somewhere in the thesis, here is her take on artistic creation, which encapsulates Maritain's, just as eloquently.

"Your mind is the instructions when you make free things" (Isobel-Maria Grey, aged 7).

June 2021  
*The Feast of Corpus Christi*

## Abbreviations

With one exception below, all in-text citations conform to Author-Date system.

Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae* (trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 1920), Online Edition Copyright, K. Wright, (2017), Available at <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/>

Abbreviated to **(ST.)**

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## Chapter 1

### Music, beauty and Maritain: an introductory essay

‘All art is concerned with coming into being, i.e., with contriving and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being or not being, and whose origin is in the maker and not the thing made...’ (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 4; 1140 a 11-20, in Maritain, 1953, p. 67).<sup>1</sup>

#### I – The title briefly expanded

On being interrogated frequently about the subject of his doctoral thesis, the present author learned to give the two-word retort: “musical beauty.” Whilst intended to parry all but the most ardent inquiry, his terse statement nonetheless expresses the ontological kernel of the thesis: *beauty*, together with a practical creative intention—*music*. What must be described of course is the way this inquiry has been undertaken, or the lens through which this perpetually enigmatic subject is observed.

In the philosophy of music and elsewhere, noble efforts and infamous attempts abound. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche—both assigning to music a highly privileged role. Aesthetic theorists from Hanslick to Adorno and Scruton—attempting to circumscribe music’s meanings and social bearings from its formal properties; or significant composers bringing their own creative spirit to bear on the question of what constitutes a beautiful work. All are relevant, and to varying degrees, stand as pillars of post-enlightenment engagement with the enigma of music. But for the layperson, music remains simply a touchstone of emotional immediacy—at once, cathartic and expressive. Most could identify what strikes them as beautiful music, although why and how it should be, so often evades explanation.

The present study stands in contrast to, and sometimes against familiar streams of thought. Our approach to music and beauty is via the field of theological aesthetics, a chief concern of which is the recovery of the sense of beauty. It is important to clarify how this is construed, not least because a burgeoning of literary, visual and musico-theological approaches has paved the way for theological aesthetics to be recognised as a discrete field of inquiry, and one that widens the lens considerably.<sup>2</sup> What, then, characterises this inquiry as a ‘theological aesthetics?’ Our

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle continues: ‘Art, then, as has been said, is a state concerned with making, involved with a true course of reasoning, and lack of art on the contrary is a state concerned with making, involving a false course of reasoning; both are concerned with what can be otherwise.’ The typographical error (Aristotle’s book number) in the Princeton edition (Aristotle, 1984, VI, 4; 1140 a, 20, in Maritain, 1953, p. 67), has been corrected.

<sup>2</sup> For example in the *Visual Commentary on Scripture*, a curated online exhibition offering a ‘visual catena’ of Old and New Testament and Apocryphal texts: or in *The Extravagance of Music* (2018) by David Brown and

aim is to provide more than a naïve conjoining of theological questions with the concerns and categories of aesthetics. Such an approach would, in Hans Urs von Balthasar's words, produce an 'aesthetic theology' in which the 'betraying and selling out theological substance to the current viewpoints of an inner-worldly theory of beauty' (Balthasar, 1982, p. 38) compromises the moral seriousness of the theological task, and hinders genuine investigation of experience, perception and beauty.<sup>3</sup> But in order to address the enigma of beauty in music, how may each domain (theology and aesthetics) rightly exercise its authority, without vitiating the other?

The locus of our inquiry is the aesthetics of Jacques Maritain (1882–1973). An ingenious, original thinker in the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition, Maritain is vastly overlooked outside of Roman Catholic philosophy and theology, yet his profound aesthetic works contain a rich though inchoate theory of music. This has never been assessed, or more importantly, arranged, developed and continued into a coherent scheme that remains theologically responsible, and able to contend with the most well-known philosophies of music. Whilst a philosopher—and always asserting this—Maritain is serious about the role of theology, transmitted via the Church, and trusted as the ultimate authority in respect of how to live well. But as a confirmed disciple of Aquinas, Maritain has recourse to theological systems and Scholastic method derived from the ancient unity of philosophy and theology, underpinned by natural law, and upholding the observation of reality as a first principle. His is an aesthetics of re-assembly—of putting back together modes of knowledge torn apart in the Cartesian dispensation. In following Maritain, a Thomistic inquiry into musical beauty *should* be as inherently theological as it is philosophical—the domains are not in opposition.

To expand a little, Maritain is not altogether unlike Balthasar; for instance concerning the splendour of form in beauty. The difference is one of approach and expression. Whereas Balthasar confronts the notion as a theologian and straight away Christologically, Maritain

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Gavin Hopps. Here, the authors not only posit an open and wide-ranging approach to musical style and genre, and to the possibilities of revelatory experience of God, mediated through music, but rigorously critique the more restricted views of key interlocutors—Jeremy Begbie and Roger Scruton.

<sup>3</sup> Balthasar's distinction between theological aesthetics and 'aesthetic theology' centres on the former developing 'its theory of beauty from the data of revelation itself with genuinely theological methods' (Balthasar, 1982, p. 38) rather than from extra-theological categories. Balthasar insists that the source and end of revelatory knowledge is the person of Christ—God in the flesh, and therefore that the incarnation is *the* aesthetic 'event' which interprets beauty and from which revelation flows. 'At the heart of Balthasar's aesthetic lies the notion that when an object gives itself to be seen, it gives more than itself. It gives something which ultimately transcends it ... The invisible thereby comes to presence in the visible' (Howsare, 2009, p. 69). Thus in Balthasar, the supreme form of the Incarnation is the yardstick for all forms, and 'theology is indissolubly united with this form. It has therefore acquired an aesthetic quality' (Chia, 1996, p. 76).

evaluates beautiful form philosophically. But critically, he renovates the idea—unmooring it from its classical legacy, and transfiguring it in light of Christian revelation. Maritain takes ‘the long view,’ but inevitably concludes that the incarnation marks the start of a new human aesthetic sensitivity and the genesis of the creative ‘self.’ It is the divine person of Christ (the supreme and transcendent analogate of aesthetic beauty) which makes sense of the corporeal, embodied world—a world in which artistic creation plays a uniquely special role in the manifestation of beauty. In distinguishing what is proper to theology and what is proper to aesthetics (one does not substitute for the other) yet showing how the virtues of both can be related and dwell in the same person, Maritain’s tradition-constituted application points the way for a new approach to musical beauty—one that is definitively a ‘theological’ aesthetics, indeed an expanded and progressive version. In turn, this points to a broader portrayal of Maritain, as more than just ‘a philosopher looking at things’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 304).

This chapter is an introductory guide: a transparent discussion of the fundamental theme of the thesis and a precis of its trajectory, methodological issues to be negotiated, and an outline of the chapters which follow. A glance at the contents page reveals the scope of inquiry, which could turn out to be perilously broad. We journey from Christian antiquity, via Scholasticism and St. Thomas Aquinas, to Jacques Maritain in the twentieth century; encompassing musical elements, composing process, and commentaries on actual works of music. But our focus on musical beauty and on knowledge is intense and tightly bounded, providing logical and coherent thematic continuity.

Much of the material in subsequent chapters is necessarily complex; but here, questions are addressed conversationally, in their basic form. Why musical beauty, and why should Maritain be our guide and interpreter of musical beauty? What makes Maritain so important to our understanding of beauty, distinct from those influential voices (older and newer) who represent what could be branded as the dominant aesthetic narrative? The critical doctrines of that narrative—how musical beauty, understanding and emotion has been defined in post-enlightenment philosophy and musicology, are well documented.<sup>4</sup> However, Jacques Maritain, and Thomism as a tradition and discipline, are unambiguously different in essence and method. This is mirrored by the degree to which scholarship has often overlooked their contribution to

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<sup>4</sup> Kania (2017) identifies Peter Kivy, Jerrold Levinson, Malcolm Budd and Roger Scruton as prominent voices in modern musical aesthetics, who all essentially adhere to an idealist agenda. In admittedly reductionistic terms, this is to delineate the ontology, reception and emotional properties of music as cognitively constructed, or better, ‘reconstructed’ phenomena, and not as discoverable, naturally-observed realities which simply exist or come into being.

aesthetics in general and to musical aesthetics most acutely. This context is vital to the thesis, and a short overview of scholarship in Maritain's aesthetics will be given.<sup>5</sup> This will be greatly enlarged and utilised in the chapters that follow.

It remains, in this brief opening, to stress the epistemological character of the thesis. 'Poetic Knowledge,' as it relates to musical beauty, is the 'engine' of our inquiry. With Maritain, we will investigate the involvement of a form of knowing which is essentially artistic intellection. It is non-propositional, non-discursive, and more controversially, fully intuitive and free from concept or abstraction. It is described as 'a knowledge that is different enough from what we commonly call knowledge, a knowledge which is not expressible in ideas and judgements, but which is rather experience than knowledge' (Maritain, 1955, pp. 44-51). This form of affective inclination in the artist expresses itself in the work to be made and in the work that is made. It orients us towards musical creation, or the first things of the musical 'event.'<sup>6</sup>

Finally, in the word 'theological,' the unifying constituent and final object of the field of study is manifested. A theological aesthetic of musical beauty will, in its very character and essence, surpass privileging or reifying music solely as a human phenomenon or construct. It will have as its objective the person of the Divine, and each chapter will not deviate far from this mandate. Consequently, the distinction between post-Enlightenment idealism and the realist agenda of Jacques Maritain's aesthetic philosophy becomes very pronounced indeed.

## II – Why musical beauty? A provocative opening dialogue

The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are dull as night  
And his affections dark as Erebus:  
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music. (Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act V, Scene 1)

From the earliest times, music has been often viewed with suspicion and always with pragmatism. It was claimed to harbour the potential to draw one's soul away from higher things, towards baser emotions, on account of its affective immediacy and pleasurable sensualities. For this reason the pursuit of 'good' music was of paramount concern. This concern is

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<sup>5</sup> In respect of musical aesthetics, an exception is the unpublished doctoral dissertation '*Maritain and Music*' by Clare Joseph Martini. A brief appraisal of Martini (1959) is given later in this chapter.

<sup>6</sup> 'The promise of poetic knowledge is that it makes a claim to real knowledge, a knowledge that cannot be substituted for by more purely conceptual, analytic modes of knowing' (McInerney, 2012, p. 17).

expressed in Plato and St. Augustine,<sup>7</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>8</sup> and beyond. Those who sought to prohibit nonetheless shared with music's advocates an implicit acknowledgment of its powerful effect on the inmost affections of the person—and correspondingly, on the outward wellbeing of society. The crux of the matter was the condition of being moved by the 'concord of sweet sounds.' This was Augustine's agony.

A significant question arises. Can musical beauty, by common consent a phenomenon of remarkable 'otherness,' be meaningfully interpreted in transcendental terms, and comprehended in a manner whereby something of the beauty of God is perceived, mediated and shared through participation in music?<sup>9</sup> The early Fathers of the Church, more closely imitating Plotinus than Plato, interrogated this as they discriminated between musical experiences oriented towards one divine source—participative of the divinely-created natural order of things (appropriate beauty), and subjective affective response where emotion turns in on itself and the soul is directed away from God (inappropriate beauty).<sup>10</sup> Augustine hesitantly concurs that music can be good, and under the right moral disposition, potentially beautiful. The writers of Christian Antiquity, aiming solely for the worship of God, expressed the moral seriousness of the theological task far more stringently than those of the Classical world. The parameters of beauty and beautiful sounds were demarcated with great circumspection.

Whilst necessarily beginning in antiquity, a musical aesthetic cannot remain there. Nor should we fail to acknowledge that in our own age, the experience of beauty is commonly taken to be a wholly subjective matter, disinterested and introspective, or a matter of taste, in which personal satisfaction concludes the experience. Objective truth and knowledge are seldom implicated. For these reasons, we leap forward a long time, to view the question in light of the more developed philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. It must be stated from the

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<sup>7</sup> The affective, pleasurable qualities of music are acknowledged by Plato as effective tools and 'a powerful instrument' (Pelosi, 2010, p. 14) for rightful education and formation in the individual and the state. In his *Confessions*, Augustine is torn between loving God and loving music, and he desperately seeks to reconcile the two. 'Thus I fluctuate between peril of pleasure, and approved wholesomeness; ... Yet when it befalls me to be more moved with the voice than the words sung, I confess to have sinned penally, and then had rather not hear the music' (Augustine, 1932, p. 235).

<sup>8</sup> In the *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas lists five objections to the use of music, all gravitating around the suitability of such a distracting and 'unspiritual' mode of expression in the worship of God. As we will discover, Aquinas roundly discounts these objections. (ST. II-II, q. 91, a. 2).

<sup>9</sup> The expressions 'participation in music' and 'musical experiences' are used to define broad composite experience and to bypass the division of music into strict creation, transmission and reception categories. It emphasises participation and intellection across the board. This helps to make sense of the earliest commentaries on music for which no record of 'composition' or 'performance,' actually exists.

<sup>10</sup> 'In Neoplatonic philosophy, when the soul hears music it likens itself to the proportions in music, consequently imitating or ascending to the One' (Wegge, 1999, p. iii).

outset that Aquinas does not offer a sustained or explicit answer, and his ‘aesthetics’ must be assembled from disparate sources, most of which have little to do with music. But his famous statement concerning beauty, ‘*pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent*’ or ‘*id quod visum placet*’ (ST. I, q. 5, a. 4, ad.1),<sup>11</sup> is a good place to start.

Is the pleasing quality of what is made or heard framed solely in forthright, raw sensuous terms; or does Aquinas’s statement permit any sense of the transcendental infusing pleasure? It is right to begin with the senses, as they provide our first observational encounter with things, beauty included. This is a pillar of realist philosophy. But it seems inadequate to end with the senses or to elevate any account of the musical experience that fails to accommodate a deep intuition of being, sense of wonder, awe, ecstasy, self-revelation—all well-attested gifts of music.<sup>12</sup> We are seeking a more profound account of beauty, but with a proviso as to what constitutes pleasure, and especially, what gives rise to it. The creative artist, too, insists on the right of beauty to be thrilling, to captivate, surprise, disturb, encompass darkness and death (not all pleasurable things); but most of all, to dynamically alter our perception in order to see or hear differently. But we are in a similar predicament to Augustine—beauty might be too emotive, too sensorially tempting.

Aquinas’s definition is straightforward, and beauty is afforded immediacy. It concerns a moment of intuition and its effect on the perceiver. There is no abstraction and scrutiny of the experience before designating it as ‘beautiful’—it is direct and reactive, and cognition is the ground of affective knowledge. Two observations can be made. First, beauty manifests as a gift: it is not manufactured or otherwise conjured into being. It is received with pleasure, not forced into existence. This is easier to envisage when applied to the natural world, in which there exists an immediate and universal given-ness to the beautiful, but is more strained in relation to constructed works of art, where beauty emanates from humanly-created objects. Second, Aquinas’s statement grounds the experience of beauty in reality—to be specific, beautiful *things*, objects; not immaterial or spiritual entities. So however much we may wish

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Beautiful things are those which please when seen’ (ST. I, q. 5, a. 4, ad. 1) is often shortened to ‘*id quod visum placet*’ or ‘that which pleases merely by being seen.’ There are immediate justifications for converting this to the auditory sense. In the hierarchy of the senses, the faculty of sight and hearing are historically afforded pre-eminence. When taken in the sense of ‘aesthetic vision’ or ‘perceived’ (Eco, 1986, pp. 65-73), the word ‘seen’ becomes applicable to sound, and the person to whom it relates as ‘perceiver.’

<sup>12</sup> Pinker’s notorious assessment of music as ‘auditory cheesecake’ (Pinker, 1997, p. 534) captures the reductionist end of a purely psychological view—pleasure and the senses entirely severed from transcendental considerations and music rendered a virtue-less experience. By contrast, Aquinas’s statement arises in the context of a general discussion of ‘the good.’

to form an association between experiences of musical beauty and transcendental awareness, Aquinas, without precluding this, offers a more down-to-earth definition. He helpfully mediates between two extremes: ‘(a) making beauty out as an object of worship, and (b) demonising beauty (particularly physical beauty) as an evil’ (Sevier, 2015, p. 8).

People crave beauty and transcendence. Yet from the varying perspectives of artists, receivers and critics, we are caught in the dilemma that it cannot be contrived, and in the paradox that the sense of beauty should not arise through desire, but from simple cognition. Oscar Wilde ironically states, ‘the artist is the creator of beautiful things,’<sup>13</sup> which is technically true. Yet if beauty cannot be manufactured, the best an artist can do is to create a work, formed in harmony with the image of its totality and conferred with all the skill at one’s disposal. Fundamentally, the work is made through and according to the mind’s predisposition to divine ‘the rules’ of making it—uniquely applied to that work, and not through any exterior concept imposed upon it. In Wilde’s analysis, a work is either well-made or badly-made and that is that.<sup>14</sup> We may wish that the work possesses the qualities wherein beauty manifests, but this is by no means a given, and whether it does is determined by the freedom given to a work at each stage and upon its completion. Under this condition, the work acquires the ability to engender an experience of the beautiful.<sup>15</sup> Attempting to procure beauty would compromise and undermine the integrity of artist and of the work made, for artistry is essentially speculative. With this in mind, a not-too-sharp division between the fine (free) arts and other forms is advisable, because of their mutual concern with making and potential for the finished work to be beautiful, albeit in varying degrees. (Maritain, 1953, p. 61).

In Shakespeare’s famous text, the condition of being ‘moved with concord of sweet sounds’ fruitfully transforms Aquinas’s definition of beauty from the visual to the auditory sense without conceding its simplicity and meaning. In this version of the discernment of musical beauty, there is an added virtue-evidencing counterpart—beautiful music accompanies and reveals what already exists within the person. Converting Lorenzo’s phrase into a positive

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<sup>13</sup> In the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Wilde continues: ‘to reveal and conceal is the artist’s aim’ (Wilde, 1952, p. 5).

<sup>14</sup> ‘Maritain writes that Oscar Wilde was but a good Thomist when he wrote “the fact of a man being a poisoner has nothing against his prose”’ (Kerr, 2000, p. 103).

<sup>15</sup> ‘Freedom’ is one result of the conformity between mind and things in which the work that ensues is completely unique: it could exist in no other manifestation or formulation—it exhibits integrity. S.K. Langer’s phrase ‘The dignity of music demands that it should be autonomous; its existence should have no explanation’ (Langer, 1942, p. 236) is pertinent. Underlining the essential non-discursive character of musical meaning in relation to auditory experience (hence her similar term ‘the unspeakable’) she strongly infers that the artwork, not the effort of artist or recipient, is what ultimately causes an experience of the beautiful.

statement underscores this, for it would read: *'The man that hath music in himself, and/or is moved by the concord of sweet sounds.'* It represents a state where the apprehension of a beautiful sound instantly resonates with a sympathetic interior condition, and goodness pervades (the person is to be trusted). According to the Aristotelian-Thomistic view, truth also resides in this conformity, for it indicates that the intellect is predisposed to discern beauty or the 'rules' of art. It also suggests that whilst the practical life of artistic creation and that pertaining to the moral existence remain distinct and ordered to different ends (the good of the work and the good of the person), they are not strangers to each other.

This emphasises the traditional convertibility of the transcendentals. Beauty signals—it clarifies and illuminates the good. For Shakespeare's Lorenzo, its recognition and appreciation is the litmus test of virtue in a person: *'mark the music,'* and its lack is the epitome of darkness or virtue-less-ness. Cassirer noted that 'art gives us the motions of the human soul in all its depth and variety' (Cassirer, in Meyer, 1956, p. 18)—a view afforded real moral gravity when cast in a moral or theological light. It seems that those 'motions' are ordered, for good or bad, in accordance with receptivity to beauty. The expression 'motion of the soul' harks back to Classical and Christian antiquity, and whilst the ethical bearing of those motions is not implicated by Cassirer, it is notable that he retains the word 'soul' in an age where it is virtually redundant. Beauty may well be a special way for music to be good; even, to engender the good.

In the musician also, we frequently find no less a concern for transcendental unity and the congruence of beauty and virtue.

A masterwork awakens in us reactions of a spiritual order that are already in us, only waiting to be aroused. When Beethoven's music exhorts us to 'be noble,' 'be compassionate,' 'be strong,' he awakens moral ideas that are already within us. His music cannot persuade: it makes evident. It does not shape conduct: it is itself the exemplification of a particular way of looking at life (Copland, 1952, p. 17).

This composer speaks of music not as a 'language,' but as a surrogate for religious experience. Whilst recognising the human appetite for the good, he draws the line at music actually shaping human conduct, diverging from the traditional view that music works for good or bad in the person. Modernity is wary of such attributions because its evaluation of musical expression is no longer (knowingly) grounded in the transcendentals. The contemporary philosopher Roger Scruton approaches a moral philosophy of music that is coupled to the sense of beauty.<sup>16</sup> He

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<sup>16</sup> Scruton's account might be described as a quasi-moral or societal-reflective philosophy of music. He notices a situation where the individual and the prevailing culture are profoundly shaped by each other, and in which religion has an obvious part. (Scruton, 1997, 380–91). This is a considerable step back from an archetypical



draws copious parallels between musical elements, expression, societal actions and sensibilities, but stops well short of outlining a ‘theological’ aesthetic. Scruton never suggests, for instance, that the state and motion of the soul, or virtue, knowledge, discernment and judgement, actually inhere to the elemental fabric of music, to be perfected in line with the quality of human sensory apprehension (or conversely, vitiated, as Shakespeare contends).<sup>17</sup>

The question ‘why musical beauty?’ has been posed to address an inadequacy, and to be a provocative starting point for a theologically-oriented treatise on music. The field of theological aesthetics is defined by interdisciplinary thinking, wide-ranging sources and an especially long view of history, and this describes the present thesis. Theological aesthetics seeks to recover the epistemological unity and dialogue between religion, philosophy and art which was overwhelmed by enlightenment definitions of beauty. These definitions tended to sever beauty from intellectual considerations, and from a causal or theological grounding in the transcendentals.<sup>18</sup> Formerly, ‘belief in the participative ordering of all things in coherent and coincident ways allowed one to say that earthly beauty was irradiated by divine glory, even if quite incapable of encompassing or capturing it’ (Quash, 2013). Latterly, mystery was expunged and ‘existence had been reduced to mundane material causes’ (Jacobs, 2016, p. 18).

The quandary of aesthetics in dealing with the experience of beauty in music was captured in the following (real) exchange.

**Professor:** “But what is the *content* of that experience which actually provides the moment of aesthetic appreciation?”

**Student:** “What do you mean by content?”

**Professor:** “That’s a fair question!”

There was an expectation in the initial question. Something should be felt or transmitted in the way of actual content. The clamour for nameable, emotion-specific content in the experience of music is symptomatic of post-enlightenment aesthetics. Once caught in it, there is an obligation to call upon abstractive processes and secondary introspection: to confine and

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objective aesthetic, deriving in some way from the transcendental beauty of God, and which is humanly echoed, albeit imperfectly, in created works of music.

<sup>17</sup> Hanink critiques several ways in which Scruton disconnects the transcendentals from each other, thus isolating beauty. For instance, the concern that beauty may distract from what is true or good; or Scruton’s observation that art itself frequently dismisses beauty as its goal. Hanink counters these from the very metaphysical perspective which Scruton resolutely avoids. (Hanink, 2015, p. 154).

<sup>18</sup> For instance, the theory of sublime art propounded by Edmund Burke in his treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1757. Considered a proto-psychological account, Burke’s enquiry construed aesthetic response as unmediated emotional arousal.

classify the experience, to set parameters; or (more recently) to reduce the sense of musical beauty to scientific explanations. All this should be impossible for the Kantian mind to entertain when describing such things as God, the soul, the ineffable, or mystery. These things, as William James states, ‘could not properly be objects of knowledge at all’ (James, 1952, pp, 54-55). Yet, they are perennial ‘objects’ of music.<sup>19</sup>

Cassirer expressed the reality of aesthetic apprehension far less paradoxically. ‘The form, the measure, the rhythm’ of the soul’s motions, ‘is not comparable to any single state of emotion. What we feel in art is not a simple or single emotional quality. It is the dynamic process of life itself’ (Cassirer, in Meyer, 1956, p. 18). To demand a sharply delineated matrix of content for the beautiful experience is incongruous. In this sense, the phrase ‘beauty is in the eye (or ear) of the beholder’ is perfectly true. Otherwise, it is a pretext to avoid the objective delineations of beauty which a realist aesthetic offers, or the high view mandated by a theological account.

In Scruton’s view, contemporary Western culture has reached a low ebb where objectivity and critical judgement in matters of aesthetic perception is largely overruled by hedonism and sentimentality (emotion and content ‘unmoored’). Pleasure experienced like this would have been anathema to Aquinas, and a world away from the ascetic, soul-searching of Augustine. The logical end of such a state is that sensibility to real beauty becomes anesthetised, and all that is left to move the soul are phantasmagorical appearances—false beauties, as Augustine would have it.<sup>20</sup> This is where Scruton unfortunately leaves the matter—unwilling to draw higher, more transcendent or virtue-based conclusions. To the question ‘why musical beauty?’ ‘the full answer demands a theological turn, and it does so as well for Thomas and Maritain’ (Hanink, 2015, p. 155).

### III – Why Jacques Maritain? – The aesthetic ‘landscape’

That an artist should be interested in scholasticism, should find a philosophy of art in St. Thomas, Cajetan, and John of St. Thomas, and should use the principles of this philosophy to understand and explain what is going on in the vanguard of painting, music and poetry in the twentieth century, will remain one of the best surprises that ever confronted historians of philosophy (Simon, 1974, p. 7).

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<sup>19</sup> Aidan Nichols drives the point home. ‘Poor old Immanuel Kant failed to realise that what is given in the sensuous matrix of the artwork is an *intelligibility* – deriving ultimately, like all intelligibilities, from divine ideas. True, in the case of a work of art, this intelligibility cannot be detached from the sensuous object and set up in a conceptual business all on its own’ (Nichols, 2007, p. 135).

<sup>20</sup> In *De Musica*, St. Augustine advises that phantasms—images of images conjured in the memory—do not equate to truth or the actual knowledge of a thing and must not be trusted. (Augustine, 2002, p. 364).

Searching for a candidate to provide a language for the experience of musical beauty, the following criteria were essential. (1) Familiarity with pre-enlightenment thought; (2) a deeply integrated theological and philosophical method; and (3) a profound concern for the aesthetic mind and knowledge of artistry.

Mindful of the last criterion, Rowan Williams (2005, pp.128-9) offers Jacques Maritain as a worthy contender who is well overdue a revival. Williams identifies Maritain's significant use of the word *music* and an intriguing 'pervasiveness of the musical analogy in Maritain.' As Balthasar (1982, p. 99) asserts, 'music is so close to the highest that it must be regarded as the first and last of all the arts,' and he suggests that for this reason 'a genuine theory of art must depict the general disposition of artists.'<sup>21</sup> Maritain uniquely satisfies these conditions – stating quite plainly that 'music is perhaps the most significant of all [the arts].' He continues, 'But music, I think, requires a separate, quite special analysis (Maritain, 1953, p. 4). We must establish that he never provided this analysis. What exists is inchoate, veiled and needing completion. On the other hand, what Maritain does provide is sustained and sophisticated engagement with the artistry of the poet and the painter.

In dealing with the aesthetics of Jacques Maritain, we are struck by two realities. First that a non-compartmentalised approach is essential. One could assess him as a philosopher alone; indeed his oeuvre reaches into most corners of philosophical enquiry. He might also be regarded as a mainstay of conservative Roman Catholicism and its foremost Thomistic champion in the first half of the twentieth century. But working within autonomous philosophical or theological boundaries and definitions undermines Maritain's own emphasis on practical artistry—the work made and the process of its creation. For this reason T.S. Eliot, a close contemporary, termed Maritain 'the most conspicuous figure and probably the most powerful force in contemporary French philosophy' (Eliot, 1930, p. 101).<sup>22</sup>

All sources articulate that Maritain was self-schooled in the scholastic tradition, with Aquinas as his foundation—he somewhat 'discovered' both. Davies (1992, pp. 10-14) notes that to separate the theology and philosophy of St. Thomas is a needless distinction that Aquinas himself would not recognise, nor was it how he worked. Maritain followed suit, to the extent

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<sup>21</sup> Balthasar's assertion is less theological than meets the eye, in that the attribution 'the highest' (whilst plainly also referring to the one source) reflects the process of pure 'ordering and dissolving' which continues uninterrupted in music; a process not characteristic of the other arts.

<sup>22</sup> This comment is widely circulated in the literature and reprinted in cover material of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Maritain, 1953). The bibliographic reference is as close as can be determined.

that he followed Thomas, whose philosophy, ‘while remaining absolutely distinct’ is always ‘in vital communication with the superior wisdom of theology and contemplation (Maritain, 1931, p. xvi). In a theological aesthetics, we must strike a methodological balance between utilising sources distinctive to the disciplines (and conversing in discipline-specific terms), and allowing sources to mingle and illuminate one another. This was the spirit of Maritain himself—an approach that was progressive and assimilative in its assumption of Aquinas. It is an ideal model for a fresh approach to musical beauty.<sup>23</sup>

A second reality is that sources dealing with Maritain’s aesthetics and its pivotal texts,<sup>24</sup> are surprisingly scarce. This is paradoxical given his proximity to and popularity among the artistic community of Paris and further afield. Painters, poets and a few composers really ‘got’ Maritain, and found in his work a theory and language that made sense of their own endeavours.<sup>25</sup> This fact has not penetrated or influenced the main discourses in philosophical aesthetics, which also generally emphasise reception, not production, and there is no analysis of Maritain’s work in any prominent philosophy of music. Maritain stands apart and he resists tidy classification.

### ***Maritain Scholarship – The General Aesthetics***

Two isolated monographs on Maritain’s aesthetics are Hanke (1973) and Trapani (2011). We immediately notice that the latter makes no reference to the former, reinforcing a sense of discontinuity in Maritain scholarship.<sup>26</sup> He is not a figure around whom conversation or debate in art criticism and aesthetics has revolved. Hanke locates trends and literature in earlier twentieth century aesthetics, alongside an analysis of Maritain’s theory and method—a rare contextual approach to Maritain.<sup>27</sup> Hanke’s starting point is the ontological foundation of beauty and form, proceeding through a discussion of signification, to Maritain’s idea of Poetic

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<sup>23</sup> The preface to *The Angelic Doctor* (Maritain, 1931) provides an excellent manifesto from Maritain himself. He sets out in very simple ways the terms of his engagement with Aquinas, and his grounds for finding in St. Thomas universally applicable solutions to contemporary questions. In this respect, the historically-rooted approach of Eco (1986, p. 127, and 1988) is markedly different. Eco’s critique of Maritain (methodological overreaching and ‘creative licence’) reflects his alternative approach to Aquinas’s texts. Maritain does not wish to return to Medievalism or historical research.

<sup>24</sup> The two most frequently cited primary sources are *Art and Scholasticism* (1920, 1927, 1935) and *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (1953), Maritain’s summative artistic text. These are not the only aesthetic texts, and other several epistemological works will bear greatly upon our inquiry.

<sup>25</sup> Gide, Mauriac, Cocteau; Picasso, Chagall; Stravinsky, Satie, Auric; Gilson, Berdyaev, are a modest sample. It is no exaggeration to state that every major artist in Paris between the wars had some connection to Maritain.

<sup>26</sup> Rowan Williams also draws attention to Hanke (1973), as the only available source that explains the central tenets of Maritain’s aesthetic theory. Before Trapani (2011), this was indeed the case.

<sup>27</sup> Nichols 2007, p. 135 refers to Hanke’s study.

Intuition and the creative process. The strength of Trapani (2011) lies in the meticulous textual research, and systematic explanations with which the author illuminates the epistemological structure of Maritain's scheme. He explains Maritain's construal of intuition as the basis for poetry and identifies the central precept of Maritain's aesthetics: the thesis that spontaneous, non-philosophical, divinatory intuition truly interprets art, beauty, moral and natural law and awareness of God. Furthermore, that there exists a form of native knowledge that requires no intellectual framework in which to immediately contemplate the import of an artwork. The latter chapters of this thesis reflect critical engagement with Trapani's work, and attempt to somewhat revise it.<sup>28</sup>

Grasping the significance of Maritain's claim, but framing it as a matter of departure from traditional Thomist epistemology, Pattison (1998) questions whether intuition can be the basis for knowledge prior to an act of abstraction. But his view that a certain 'heteronomy of faith over art' makes Maritain reluctant to accept contemporary art as speaking for itself, instead requiring it to be 'tested against a given rule of faith' (Pattison 1998, p. 52), overlooks Maritain's sustained engagement with modern art and artists, or with his integrative approach to St. Thomas.

McInerny (1982) underscores the originality of *Art and Scholasticism*, Maritain's first aesthetic text, claiming it to have created a genre apart from the multitude of previous writings in aesthetics.<sup>29</sup> McInerny also addresses the critique of fidelity to Aquinas, finding that Maritain did not conflict with St. Thomas, but extended his reach into areas where strict exegetical conformity (or mediaeval aesthetics, as Eco maintains) would not permit.<sup>30</sup> Of Thomism, 'it is its task,' says Maritain, 'to join the artistic treasure of modern times to a philosophy of art and beauty that is truly universal and at the same time comprehensive of the efforts of the present moment.'<sup>31</sup> Beauty must be understood, not as a relic of past creative efforts, but as a present concern 'which, while rising to knowledge of the supra-sensible, first demands of experience

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<sup>28</sup> Trapani utilises Sullivan (1964), which appears to be the only PhD dissertation entirely devoted to Maritain's theory of Poetic Intuition. We have drawn from the same source in this thesis.

<sup>29</sup> Williams (2005) endorses McInerny's (2003) survey of the life and work of Maritain.

<sup>30</sup> Dougherty (2010) identifies the focus of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Maritain, 1953) as the genesis of the creative process itself – 'the work before the work' – or how the artwork comes into being through intuitivity. Both Dougherty (2010) and Haynes (2015) claim that Maritain's aesthetic theory and its principal texts are preeminent examples in art philosophy, on the basis that aesthetic criteria, judgement and actual definitions of what constitutes art may all be drawn from Maritain's oeuvre, and a generous scope of artistic expressions may be scrutinised.

<sup>31</sup> Maritain (1930) stresses a universal definition of Thomism from which no field of inquiry is excluded, but which resists particularity: one cannot speak of a 'Thomist literary school, painting, novel or poem.'

a full adherence to the sensible real' (Maritain, 1931, p. xii). On such terms, the highly abstract and intuitive domain of music appears a natural epistemic bridge between the 'supra-sensible' and the 'sensible real.' The 'special, separate analysis' called for by Maritain (from the status he affords to music) begins to take shape—a transcendental aesthetic of music is imaginable.

In a rare chapter from the world of art criticism,<sup>32</sup> Newton Smith (1971) explains that each component of Maritain's system is united to a greater whole, and that each work is joined to his entire philosophical task. This draws us towards a deeply integrative theory of art in which the virtues of artistic creation are fully distinguishable, yet not separable from fundamental questions of existence and the moral life. The background and development of Maritain's aesthetics is firmly rooted in the intuition of being, and Hudson (1987) identifies a line of thought in Maritain's work that starts with the objective examination of beauty, but which, by *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Maritain, 1953), turns to a more subjective encounter with the 'sensible real' and with emotion itself. But 'subjectivity' and 'emotion' are couched in a very different language to those connotations of affect and self-expression which are ubiquitous in respect of music and musical meaning.

Emotion is essential in the perception of beauty. But what sort of emotion? It is not the emotion which I called brute or merely subjective. It is another kind of emotion—one with knowledge ... Such an emotion transcends mere subjectivity, and draws the mind towards things known and toward knowing more (Maritain, 1953, p. 8).

The implications of this for the development of a theological aesthetic of musical beauty are clear. In upholding the traditional unity of the transcendentals—that essential harmony of the true, the good and the beautiful, together with the theological mandate that these point back to God, we must be just as ready to describe the encounter between things and the self which gives rise to musical delight. We are to fully adhere to the sensible real. There is no contradiction in Maritain, but rather a conjunction between 'his theory of art as a practical virtue and his realist theory of beauty as a matter of integrity, proportion and radiance' (Conley, 2011, pp. 245-246).

### ***The Musical Aesthetics***

An intriguing problem to face is the paucity of scholarship connecting Maritain's aesthetics to music. This is surprising, given his implicit invitation to do so, and the high status he afforded

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<sup>32</sup> As part of a volume appraising early-to-mid twentieth century aesthetic theory and art criticism, this chapter is preceded by critical essays on Cassirer and Langer. Trapani (2000) stresses the uniqueness of Maritain's contribution to aesthetics, especially in underscoring the metaphysical foundations of the artistic experience.

to music among the arts. Maritain's ontology of art is built around the notion of intuitive creativity, and of creation in any art being an intellectual work. His engagement with other arts, notably poetry and painting, was scholarly and personal, so it is hard not to envisage an application of Thomistic principles to the creation and apprehension of music: a 'work-making' philosophy to probe the deepest activity of the mind in the apprehension of musical beauty.

C.J. Martini's doctoral thesis *Maritain and Music* (Martini 1959) appears to be the only prior extensive scholarly work on Maritain and music.<sup>33</sup> Martini offers a contemporaneous review of Maritain's aesthetics, its metaphysical and Thomist underpinning, its relevance to modernism and an association to the writing of particular composers. The author stresses that he is not producing the 'separate, quite special analysis' of music which Maritain (1953, p. 4) calls for in *Creative Intuition*, and where Maritain avoided exegetic engagement with actual music, Martini has followed suit. He neither offers a progressive 'Thomistic musicology' derived from Maritain's method, nor a hermeneutic of specific works, and the reader remains largely detached from actual music and its elemental genesis. The present thesis addresses this: from the outset recognising the real existence of musical sound, and engaging significantly with musical works.

From *Creative Intuition*, Martini identifies two important strands upon which the present thesis has substantially built. First, that Maritain increasingly adopts musical ideas and language to convey the earliest intuitions of a work of poetry; and second, that the medium of music grants a singular insight to the philosopher, because the composer is uniquely and directly able to bridge the gap between inaudible, intuitive feeling and audible expression. Martini neither extends each strand to its logical conclusion (for instance, the possibility that music is the first cause of all art), nor grasps the inexorable flow of Maritain's text towards a discrete (though inchoate) philosophy of music. Again, the present work recognises both, and attempts to construct the analysis which Maritain sought.

Maritain (1943, p. 95) terms himself 'the philosopher seeking to note the wind-shifts of the contemporary spirit', which defines the task he set himself. He explored the creative dimension

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<sup>33</sup> The thesis is dated 1958 by the Jacques Maritain Centre, University of Notre Dame, although the first page of the typed manuscript is marked 1959. The work is listed in the Center's bibliography of books and theses, but no information about its author is given, no further academic work was forthcoming, and there is no reference to the thesis in any published work other than single bibliographic entries in Fallon (2002, p. 287) and Giroud (2015, pp. 457, 473). An oversight in Martini's thesis is the omission of Aaron Copland's contribution to a 'Maritainian' understanding of composing process. In Copland (1952), the author draws on Maritain, and the present thesis interprets Copland's account of musical creation and apprehension in this light.

of artworks in such a free-thinking and discursive way that it profoundly resonated with contemporaneous artists, including composers. The ‘contemporary spirit’ was the artistic environment of fin de siècle and early twentieth century Paris: a location where music experienced radical and revolutionary ‘wind-shifts.’ This context is important, because Maritain wasn’t observing from the side-lines, but was entrenched within that socio-cultural milieu, counting many of the age’s greatest artistic luminaries as friends. Schloesser (2000) draws attention to the relationship with Jean Cocteau, through which Maritain’s critical outlook on music, including his first encounter with Stravinsky, began to develop seriously.<sup>34</sup>

However, given Maritain’s Thomist perspective and method, firmly established by 1920 in the first edition of *Art and Scholasticism*, we see a correspondence between art, philosophy and theology, the import of which did not penetrate beyond the era of Paris between the wars. There is little doubt that Maritain’s Thomistic epistemology was so at odds with the intellectual climate and dominant philosophical schools of thought, that it was practically ‘out-of-fashion’ from the start. The Sorbonne was characterised, in Raïssa Maritain’s words, by ‘integral relativism, intellectual scepticism, and ... moral nihilism.’ (Trapani 2011, p. 14).

In specifically theological and musicological contexts, there are parallel factors which indicate that Maritain’s aesthetics, and especially his appropriation of music, need to be rediscovered. The influence of Thomism waned, culminating in the Second Vatican Council, where the impact of theologians like Rahner, Guardini and Balthasar dominated the search for answers to human experience (Shadle, 2010, p. 84). They epitomised an experiential and expressive personal response to God, which made scholasticism seem austere and stuffy. Conceivably, Maritain’s pre-conciliar theological disposition and his scholastic (rules-based) philosophy of art and beauty, emphasising the intellect as its true mediator, was too firmly tethered to the first half of the twentieth century.

Similar things could be said of Maritain’s proximity to the prevailing musical wind of Neo-classicism and its adherents. Shadle (2010) describes the musical world surrounding Maritain, particularly early on, and Schloesser (2000) emphasises Maritain’s hostility to nineteenth century romanticism—a view shared by Neo-classicists in their general sense of repugnance with German decadence and excess (Whittall, 2001).<sup>35</sup> A guiding musical principle was

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<sup>34</sup> There is abundant first hand evidence that Stravinsky accepted the veracity of a Thomist-inspired interpretation of musical creativity. This will be explored in detail in the chapter *Music in Art and Scholasticism*.

<sup>35</sup> Scholarship acknowledges the manifold difficulties in identifying a Neo-classical ‘school.’ Certain composers coalesced into idealistic groupings – for instance Auric, Durey, Honegger, Milhaud, Poulenc and Tailleferre



concern for the purity of essential forms, thus suggesting an overt connection to the principles of Thomism and scholastic approaches to art and beauty (Neo-Thomism-meets-Neo-Classicism). But this is a naïve conjunction which fails to notice Maritain's own clear definition of Thomism and his rejection of the idea that one could authentically be 'neo-anything.'

Thomism is neither of the right nor of the left; it is not situated in space, but in the spirit. Thomism is a wisdom. Between it and the particular forms of culture incessant vital exchanges ought to prevail, but it is in its essence rigorously independent of these particular forms. Thus Thomist philosophy possesses the most universal principles of esthetics ... (Maritain, 1930, p. xiii).

Ultimately the Neo-classical 'cultural form' did not last and was quickly subsumed in other musical advances.<sup>36</sup> In constructing a 'Maritainian' aesthetic of musical beauty, we remain mindful of those Thomistic hallmarks which Maritain endorses.

In summary, the academic landscape in respect of Maritain's aesthetics is quite bare, and actually barren in the philosophy of music. Scholarship has not adequately addressed the focal point of his aesthetics—art in essence, or 'the creative or producing, work-making activity of the human mind' (Maritain, 1953, p. 3). Our account of the genesis of musical beauty will show how Maritain supplied an original 'Thomist-inspired philosophy of art' where 'no such philosophy existed,' and with 'no precedent to be extracted from the works of Thomas Aquinas' (Nelson, 2000, p. 162). It was a question of discovery, in the spirit and framework of St. Thomas, not the recovery of a mediaeval metaphysics. We shall follow this pattern in the chapters that follow. Originality is why *Art and Scholasticism* appeared revolutionary and attractive to artists of all sorts at the forefront of modernity. Ironically, it also accounted for Maritain's subsequent falling out of fashion.

The question 'why Maritain?' is rather easier to grasp than the question 'why musical beauty?' 'Maritain conceives the purpose of art to be the embodiment of spiritual reality in a finite organization of matter. The quest to grasp and present the transcendental becomes the fundamental dynamic of the artistic act' (Conley, 2011, p. 246). This was his focus—a unique blend of the philosophical and theological. However, the finite organization of matter becomes

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(known as 'Les Six'), who looked to Erik Satie. Other composers, at various creative junctures, infused 'Classical' or 'Viennese Classical' structural and tonal elements in individual works. Prokofiev, Stravinsky and Bartok fall into the latter category. A singular 'Neo-classical' style, is fallacious.

<sup>36</sup> In Paris, for instance, the group of composers who styled themselves *La Jeune France*. Including Olivier Messiaen, the group was partly a reaction to 'Les Six' and had a more spiritual manifesto, promoting 'the performance of works which are youthful and free, standing apart from academic or revolutionary clichés' (Simeone, 2001). A parallel between *La Jeune France*'s rejection of musical austerity and Messiaen as the musical herald of Post-Conciliar Catholicism is drawn by Fallon (2002) and Shadle (2010).

an especially acute problem given music's distinctively non-fixed, ephemeral and immaterial structures. Possibly the only reason why Maritain was reluctant to provide a separate analysis of musical beauty is the simple fact he wasn't a musician.

#### **IV - Outline of chapters**

The six chapters which follow are organised straightforwardly. There is a natural partition between chapters 2-4 and 5-7, where the latter respond to Maritain's *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (1953) and provide a detailed and systematic interpretation of the text as regards music. The summaries below give a flavour of what is to come.

The second chapter, 'Musical beauty, God and the Church: historical-ecclesiological contexts' may read as a rather 'standalone' essay, until subsequent chapters make it clear why we have started this way, and so far in the past. Taking a 'long view' adheres to the principle of continuity which characterises theological aesthetics, as well as a being an important precept of Thomistic inquiry, where innovation and originality arise from within an active tradition, and not from radical departure or novelty. We should expect the roots of pre-enlightenment engagement with music and beauty to be planted in the Church, not just in its most recognisable and glorious achievements, but almost from its inception.

The early Fathers of the Church had much to say about music and beautiful sound. They articulated it in ways which may seem strange to us today, but all the familiar elements and problems we face when striving to understand music were regular objects of inquiry in the fourth and fifth centuries. *Sound, singing and expression; affect, meaning and emotion; education, virtue and the soul.* All were entangled in the determination of what was good and beautiful, appropriate for God and the human person. The Psalms were universally hailed as an especially significant, epistemological mediator of understanding and expression, and *reason* was taken as the hallmark of sensory beauty. This will prove to be a recurrent theme.

The third chapter is an analysis of *Art and Scholasticism* (1920; 1927; 1935) in respect of music. We undertake a qualitative, thematic appraisal of every reference and allusion to music, and application of music—including those in the extensive notes (which exceed the text in length), across three editions and their translations. Maritain's subsequent aesthetics built upon the precepts established in this hugely original work, and over the next thirty years he expanded upon it in equally original ways. The long view of musical beauty, which we began in Christian Antiquity, needs another landing point, and utilising Maritain's first and most influential aesthetic text provides one. Maritain interprets beauty and the creative process through the

precepts of the Mediaeval Schoolmen. His emphasis is on making, and following suit, we construe the genesis of the musical work from its first human origin—the mind of the artisan. This draws us naturally to the composer, and it was the principles of *Art and Scholasticism* that drew Igor Stravinsky to Maritain. We discover in Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music* (1947) and other writings, abundant evidence of an approach to the craft of composition which displays all the essential ingredients of 'scholastic' aesthetic.

Definitions are important. *Harmony* and *duration*; *imitation* and *inspiration*; *sign* and *symbol*; *classicism* and *expression*, all acquire profound metaphysical or transcendental connotations, and the theological significance of music pervades. Distinctions are made between fine art music (aiming at beauty), and liturgical music (facilitating divine worship and human edification). Whilst Maritain pre-eminently addresses the former, the act of making is not construed as a separate genus of creativity, nor is it wholly divided from the liturgical-ecclesiological. Aesthetic 'virtue' points towards a kind of unity with the moral order.

In the fourth chapter, 'A Thomistic Philosophy of Music: Conceivable and Essential,' the phenomenon of musical sound is the locus around which we interpret and apply Thomistic principles of existence and the intuition of Being to the matter of musical creation and experience. This is an uncommon enterprise, as music is the 'poor relation' in Thomistic scholarship. But it is emblematic of Maritain's method, and accords with the spirit of his injunction that Aquinas should provide the groundwork for an inquiry that is progressive, 'synthetic and assimilative' (Maritain, 1931, p. xii).

The chapter shows how a Thomistic approach differs from post-enlightenment notions of musical apprehension, yet fulfils and transcends the ambition of some prominent theorists (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Roger Scruton). The sheer perplexity involved in the creation and experience of music is explored from a firmly realist standpoint, with frequent comparisons being made to the philosophical writings of eminent twentieth century composers. The chapter argues against musical idealism, or framing moments of musical beauty, ineffability and transcendence simply as a 'quasi-religious' experience.

The chapter outlines the paradoxical character of auditory reality, before turning to the fundamental matter of Being itself. The circumstances surrounding the first cognition of a musical work's existence—the genesis of musical creation—is taken as an especially revealing demonstration of Thomist-Maritainian precepts and a convincing and systematic explanation

for the composing process. The inquiry inevitably leads towards a reappraisal of the notions of ineffability and transcendence, where the latter gravitates towards a theological sense.

The final three chapters are encompassed by the title ‘Music and poetic knowledge: a separate, special analysis.’ They are essentially three divisions of a single, larger treatise. We aim to construct the philosophical theory of music to which Maritain alludes in *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (1953), and to which he invites a musician to respond. Such a theory is at once transcendental, ordered to beauty, and theologically sensitive. Yet it is also practical, reflecting on the creative-intuitive act and giving distinctive meanings to the work subsequently made. The three chapters more or less divide Maritain’s nine into manageable broad themes.

Challenging Maritain’s own assertion that his use of music is solely analogical, we propose that in the genesis of a musical work, *Poetic Knowledge* is born. It is the fruit of a preconscious intellection which naturally intuits beauty and creative precepts. The mind attains a non-conceptualisable grasp of the work through a knowledge that is affective and congenial. Consequently, musical history is construed not as the evolution of ‘styles’ in particular cultural contexts, but more as the advent and emergence of intuitive, subjective ‘knowing’ in musicians and composers. This is depicted in four long phases, corresponding to those which Maritain suggests in poetic and visual art.

Our analysis builds on the work of John Trapani, whose monograph (Trapani, 2011) systematically explains Maritain’s scholastic-inspired aesthetic, the categories and terms defined within it, and its degree of fidelity to the thought of Aquinas. Trapani isolates a special part of Maritain’s scheme, showing the extent to which it progresses well beyond St. Thomas. It infers that spontaneous, non-philosophical and divinatory intuition truly interprets art, beauty and moral and natural law. Furthermore, there exists a form of innate knowledge that requires no intellectual framework whatsoever in which to immediately contemplate the beauty of a work. Questioning this, we subject Trapani’s hypothesis to scrutiny.

Following Maritain’s own example, we use illustrative, suggestive musical extracts to support the latter part of the thesis. We analyse and reflect on music which is, in the main, contemporaneous to Maritain (early twentieth century), with the significant inclusions of Robert Schumann and J.S. Bach. The role of melody is exceedingly significant, for it is associated with purity of expression, the disclosure of truth, and with objective and subjective unification. It is an altogether ‘transcendental’ element. Our emphasis on melody draws the subjective into sharp focus, and it underscores a clear progression in Maritain’s epistemological

thought since *Art and Scholasticism*. The final chapter ends by contextualising Aquinas's famous definition of beauty (that which gives pleasure when apprehended), and concludes that the beginning and end of musical aesthetic experience is ordered to the greatest theological virtue.

As one reviewer of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* noted in 1953, 'Wisdom never makes the headlines, and I fear it will take a long time before the full stature of this book is recognised.'<sup>37</sup> Almost seventy years is long enough. Jacques Maritain is arguably the most overlooked aesthete of the twentieth century; a figure whose significant contribution is woefully unrealised in the fields of music philosophy and theological aesthetics. The present study is offered in hope of redressing the balance in a small way.

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<sup>37</sup> Praise from Francis Fergusson, the American critic and literary scholar, on the back cover of the Princeton-Bollingen Edition of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*.

## Chapter 2

### Musical beauty, God and the Church: historical-ecclesiological contexts

The musician we may think of as being exceedingly quick to beauty, drawn in a very rapture to it . . . : as the timid are sensitive to noise so he to tones and the beauty they convey; all that offends against unison or harmony in melodies and rhythms repels him; he longs for measure and shapely pattern.  
(Plotinus, *Ennead* I.3.1).

This chapter provides a historical-ecclesiological context and foundation to the thesis. It examines in very broad terms the notion of musical beauty from the earliest Christian sources, prominently in the light of St. Augustine, to bring into the foreground an existent and tangible ideal—one with practical musical implications—which remains an unbroken thread through the mediaeval age, albeit deepened and extended, until the reformation.<sup>38</sup> We are addressing the theological precepts governing the creation, comprehension, experience, and judgement of musical sounds.

In contrast to the dominant narrative<sup>39</sup> which emphasises continuity of, or conformity to, Platonic thought in early Christian views of music, the idea of musical beauty is explored as the Church's disengagement of beauty from its classical forebears, in order to express a new bipartite, core objective: the worship and glory of God and human edification. We discover a pragmatic, positive and embodied philosophy of musical beauty that is just as visible in the Patristic writers as their obvious hesitations; for a theological interpretation of musical beauty re-orientes auditory sense-experience<sup>40</sup> towards worship, the ascent of the soul and to virtue; and the Church voices this primarily through singing and melody. On such terms, the word

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<sup>38</sup> Viladesau (2000) summarises the development of musical thought between Augustine and Aquinas, drawing attention to the more permissive attitude of St. Thomas. The main point here is to emphasise longevity and continuity of thought and practice, manifested over an extraordinary length of time.

<sup>39</sup> Philosophical aesthetics (Bowman, 1998, pp. 56-66) and theological aesthetics (Begbie, 2008, pp. 77-95; Faulkner, 1996, p. 60), rightly stress the Platonic and neo-platonic dimensions of early Christian views of music; however the theological points of departure and ultimate ends of those views, as they relate to music, are underplayed—for instance in the judgement of good and beautiful sounds. Equally dominant is the emphasis on a shared, abstract and rationalistic aesthetic basis between Classical antiquity and the Christian, with far less focus on the practical existence of musical sounds requiring ethical and aesthetic consideration. Harrison (2011, pp. 27-45) offers a more balanced appraisal of Augustine, but still avoids directly addressing his categories and classifications of sound upon which the dialogue of the sixth book of *De musica* is founded.

<sup>40</sup> Hitherto understood in the Platonic sense, in that what is comprehended by the mind is superior to that experienced via the senses—which, at best, procure inferior types, shadows or forms of eternal and unobtainable archetypes. On the contrary, the senses engaged in the worship of God are rightly ordered to attaining knowledge of the real—a positive, superior version, which as Schueller (1988, p. 176) states, owes far more to Plotinus than Plato. How the senses are 'rightly ordered' then becomes the critical point of discussion for the Patristic Fathers in their aesthetic precepts.

‘aesthetic’ already becomes highly inadequate—connoting the sensual-perceptual, but not the spiritual-intellectual dimension of beauty. An express aim of the chapter, therefore, is not to discard the term *aesthetic*, but to implant this latter definition within the thesis overall.<sup>41</sup>

It is impossible to address each moment between Augustine and the Reformation, so the chapter focusses on small, revealing ‘instances,’ mostly confined to the Patristic era: almost case studies in thought and practice which set the scene and introduce the idea of musical beauty as a significant theological and philosophical concern across a vast period, but firmly grounded in Christian antiquity. Emphasis is on the continuity of thought which existed before the Reformation, and musicological implications are always considered alongside their theological and philosophical associations.

## I – Why go back?

In his commentary on the *De caelo* of Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote: ‘The study of philosophy aims not at knowing what men feel, but at what is the truth of things’ (Aquinas, *In De caelo* 1.22.228).<sup>42</sup> This tidily opens our chapter, distilling much of what is to come, and from the outset underscoring longevity of thought between the earliest ecclesial comments on music and philosophical or theological thought of later ages. Aquinas has stated nothing here that St. Augustine had not fervently endorsed some eight hundred years previously—for instance, when referring to certain chants (Harrison, 1992, pp. 170, 171), or in *De musica*, the last part of which is an aspirational ascent to truth coupled to an extremely cautious appraisal of temporal beauties. Then a millennium after Augustine, Martin Luther would still confirm many of the vital aesthetic precepts of the Patristic and Mediaeval ages, according with the tone of St. Basil’s exhortation that ‘those whose souls are musical and harmonious find their road to the things that are above most easy’ (Basil, 2003, p. 58). As Buszin (1946, p. 83) notes, Luther castigates those for whom this is not the case.<sup>43</sup> Establishing both ancestry and

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<sup>41</sup> Trapani (2011, p. 153, 163) echoes Maritain in proposing the term ‘aesthetic’ to be undesirable and undefined; however, as there exists no single word substitute which adequately incorporates beauty in a spiritual-intellectual sense, the term remains. Near the start of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, Maritain (1953, p. 39) cites Coomaraswamy’s definitions of aesthetic experience to emphasise the sheer complexity and depth of language needed in any discussion of ‘the aesthetic.’ The inadequacy and limitations of situating aesthetics as a discrete field of inquiry within the five centuries since the European Renaissance, is also noted by Holsinger (2001, p. 29).

<sup>42</sup> Emphasising the classical realist tradition, the phrase is also translated as: ‘the study of philosophy is not about knowing what individuals thought, but about the way things are’ (trans. W.K.C. Guthrie, 1939).

<sup>43</sup> Buszin’s important study, the first in modern Luther scholarship, draws together the majority of Luther’s comments about music from the reformer’s ad-hoc writings. In this instance, speaking of the unmusical, Luther writes, rather uncharitably, that they ‘do not deserve to be called a human being ... permitted to hear nothing but the braying of asses and the grunting of hogs.’

continuity of thought is an important mission of the theological aesthetician, for the strands which connect significant individuals, writings and practices are very long indeed. A thesis on Jacques Maritain's aesthetics in respect of musical beauty, resting as they do on St. Thomas, must therefore properly show something of the lineage of musical principles which, over time, and in thought and practice, embodied the ascent to truth—to God.<sup>44</sup> Maritain is just as concerned that music exhibit the truth of things as any of his scholarly precursors, for as a Thomist, he is obliged to build upon the same precepts. And we too can recognise the part played by the mediaeval age in making the Classical Christian world more comprehensible—an epistemological imperative.

The understanding of the nature of the Middle Ages—a world which seems to us an independent and original link between antiquity and modern times—requires a penetrating study of the driving forces and spiritual tendencies which created its new conception of life and new forms of art (Lang, 1983, p. 37).

The ideal of beauty arises in discussions of music and musical practices from early Christian sources, particularly in the 'voluminous writings of Western Fathers that emerged between approximately 350 and 425,' and the 'commentaries of these loquacious men is of such unprecedented scope' (Page, 2010, p. 133). There are plentiful examples from which to choose, so our initial task is to place a marker at the centre of what distinguishes the Patristic writers from the traditions of late-Classical antiquity. Modern scholars as diverse as Holsinger (2001, pp. 27-86)<sup>45</sup> and Hart (2003, pp. 274-288) concur that the Fathers differ in objective to their Platonic forebears, though sharing intellectual foundations. But Hart's essential argument is that in contrast to 'vast portions of Western philosophy from antiquity to the present ... the Christian tradition embraces an understanding of beauty unique to itself ... that is simply alien to the world this vision describes' (Hart, 2003, p. 4). Musical beauty is thus encountered as it subsists within the 'new' religion—one marked by an all-consuming, pious quest for truth, and 'shaped by Christian revelation, tradition and Scripture' (Harrison, 2011, p. 29).

Much has been written on the cosmological 'science' of musical thought in antiquity, and commentators are just as quick to focus on the apparent ambivalence of the Church Fathers to

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<sup>44</sup> Maritain's own clear view was that developing a particular line of thought, or modifying a tradition in an innovative way (which he certainly did), could only truthfully occur in continuity with the formal precepts of that tradition. This tenet is expressed across Maritain's aesthetic texts.

<sup>45</sup> Holsinger (2001) is a revisionist musicological contribution to mediaeval studies. Although aiming for ideological (cultural-anthropological) ends, and in many respects subverting Christian orthodoxy, the author recognises some factually important truths. Namely, that Mediaeval aesthetics are inextricably bound to the precepts of the Patristic age; that the Church Fathers diverged from Classical conceptions to theologically reflect a new 'incarnate aesthetic' (Martin, 1990, p. 23); and that the sensory faculties and the actions of the human body acquire special significance in respect of the previous points.



music's affective properties.<sup>46</sup> Neither aspect will be gone over again, except to illuminate a redefining of beauty in light of the 'new' Christian system of beliefs,<sup>47</sup> and to propose a more readily understandable aesthetic vocabulary. How, for instance, can one 'translate' the concept of *number* in Augustine—so very remote from the modern mind (O'Connell, 1978, p. 148)—in a way that respects his sophisticated understanding of the rhythmic motions of life; and how might this be thought of in terms of actual sound, even melody? His preoccupation with measure, weight and number reflects a deeper, more ancient approval of what is 'defined' or 'limited' (as opposed to what is not),<sup>48</sup> but this needs converting into a more recognisable theological theory of music: one more readily incorporated into a historical-ecclesiological account of beauty. Beauty in this discussion counts less as 'scientific' theory, and more the alignment of actual practice with clear theological (scriptural) principles.<sup>49</sup> In this respect, other Patristic figures, those more easily identified with musical-ecclesial practice than Augustine, instruct us rather more practically in the basic edicts of musical beauty.

Formal beauty will remain important,<sup>50</sup> but it is transfigured within 'an incarnate aesthetic' (Harrison, 1992, pp. 33-35) where the corporeal nudges out Platonic dualism as the proper mediator of beauty.<sup>51</sup> Blackwell observes Pythagorean and Aristotelian traditions being consummated within an incarnational dispensation, but the point is the same—one sees in the

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<sup>46</sup> Both aspects (the cosmic and the ascetic) are given meticulous chronological treatment by Herbert Schueller. His study also highlights the differences between ancient accounts: for instance, Aristotle's attention to 'substance, things and nature' rather than 'ideas or forms or that of number' (Schueller, 1988, p. 55). See also Bonds (2014, pp. 22-29) for a more general summary of Pythagorean-Platonic cosmology, Martin (1990, pp. 9-32), and Begbie (2008, pp. 77-95) offers a succinct précis.

<sup>47</sup> Hart (2003, p. 276) makes this redefinition more explicitly doctrinal, quoting the remark by Leo Spitzer: "'According to the Pythagoreans, it was cosmic order which was identifiable with music; according to the Christian philosophers, it was love. And in the *ordo amoris* of Augustine we have evidently a blend of the Pagan and the Christian themes: henceforth 'order' is love.'"

<sup>48</sup> In Plato's *Philebus*, several references to 'music' or sound are discussed accordingly, in which a marked distinction exists between the abstract qualities of sound and music-as-performed (in this case by a flautist). The former is described in precise terms: '[T]hose sounds which are smooth and clear and send forth a single pure note are beautiful, not relatively, but absolutely, and that there are pleasures which pertain to these by nature and result from them' (Plato, 1995, p. 345). The latter is unflatteringly described as being practically unmeasurable—essentially, guesswork (pp. 360-361).

<sup>49</sup> Carol Harrison describes the essential forms of scripture—'imagery, allegory, figures, poetry and parables'—as being fundamentally counter-Platonic; and especially that 'the visible, created, temporal order cannot simply be shunned as an ambiguous, misleading imitation of a spiritual truth which is better grasped by the mind' (Harrison, 1992, p. 82).

<sup>50</sup> As Lang (1983, p. 38) notes; '[t]he "true," the "good," and the "beautiful" did not have to be invented and shaped into form again and again, because the "ancients" had created these elements once for all.'

<sup>51</sup> Stating 'types and shadows have their ending, for the newer rite is here' (NEH, 1989, Tr. J.M. Neale and others), the Corpus Christi hymn text *Pangue lingua gloriosi corporis mysterium* by St. Thomas Aquinas, describes just as well the displacement of Greco-Roman thought as it does the consummation of Old Testament prophecy—an observation surely not lost on Aquinas.

passage of time an inexorable inclination towards the corporeal, wherein the ‘church embraced appropriate sounding music as spiritually edifying and as a suitable medium of worship’ (Blackwell, 1999, p. 101). The paradox here is that the Church, which is not a temporal institution (Lang, 1983, p. 39-40), should come to express its core purpose (the glory of God and human edification) through melody—an admittedly ephemeral but corporeally-produced element, as Augustine is at pains to clarify.<sup>52</sup> God, not the eternal forms, is understood as providentially ordering all things, and music assists in making intelligible the veiled harmony of God and nature (Chadwick 1981, p. 79-80).<sup>53</sup> Moreover, music is increasingly seen to be supremely able to accomplish this task, as well as being beneficial to theological understanding and human flourishing. By Luther, there is little of the ancient reticence concerning the beauty of physical sounds and the singing thereof.<sup>54</sup>

A final point remains to be introduced. Because we possess no mark whatsoever of ‘the sound of music’ of 1600 years ago, it is easy to overlook the reality that the sound existed and that early Church sang—and logically, must have done so for a good period in order to have caught the apostolic attention of some distinguished bishops.<sup>55</sup> What they had to say about music, on an aesthetic level alone, is often startling and surprisingly comprehensible to us today.

## II – Who to go back to?

The broad scope of inquiry having been set out, more specific terms of reference are needed. What essence do we need to distil from the Patristic writings to help us look forward to Maritain, via Aquinas, in respect of musical beauty, musical elements, sounds and comprehension? Our chosen ‘case studies’ are reasonably clear candidates.<sup>56</sup> Passages from

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<sup>52</sup> As will become clear, in the sixth book of *De musica*, Augustine instructs his disciple not to denigrate the corporeal, for a true expression of form, and therefore of beauty, is still possible despite the fallen state of humanity (Augustine, 2002, p. 332). See also his closing remarks (p. 375) concerning beautiful sounds.

<sup>53</sup> Which, as Chadwick states, is given a deeply profound resonance by Augustine in his Homily on the 42<sup>nd</sup> Psalm, where the purest ‘aesthetic’ experience of ‘celestial’ music is given to someone approaching death.

<sup>54</sup> Of all the central Reformation figures, Martin Luther expresses both the greatest continuity with the Mediaeval and Patristic traditions in his estimation of music in the service of the Church. Perhaps it is more accurate to state that Luther did not contradict the essence of Augustine’s ambivalence to music’s sensory power, but rather, turned it to full ecclesial use; greater than the early Saint could ever have recognised or countenanced (see Kristanto, 2009, pp. 16-28).

<sup>55</sup> Christopher Page (2010), in his commanding account of singing in the early centuries of the Church, charts the migration of psalmody from household to rural location, and the fact of its occurrence well prior to attracting ‘an unprecedented amount of comment from two generations of writers’ (Page, 2010, p. 136).

<sup>56</sup> Until Harrison (2019), examining the musical precepts of the Patristic Fathers as a discrete inquiry, separate to or isolated from a neo-Platonic philosophical backcloth, has been scarce in scholarship. The dominant narrative in music theology makes an inadequate distinction, with too little attention given to what was uniquely new and ‘un-Platonic’ about the theory and practice of music. An exception is the summary by Herbert Schueller (1988, pp. 203-237) of the views of a number of other Greek and Latin Patristic Fathers. They

*The Confessions* and the sixth book of *De musica* by St. Augustine (354-430); the letter of St. Athanasius (296-373), Archbishop of Alexandria, to Marcellinus on the interpretation of the Psalms; *De utilitate hymnorum* by St. Nicetas (335-414), Bishop of Remesiana; and the homily of St. Basil the Great (330-379) on the value of the Psalms in the context of Psalm 1. Each text displays a distinct aesthetic sensibility, whilst at the same time expressing core tenets, usually scriptural, raised to the level of robust dogma. One could not fail to thus interpret Nicetas's polemic that 'the objection to singing is the invention of heretics' (Nicetas, 1949, p. 67); for in this sweeping comment the practice of singing is aligned with magisterial instruction, and it follows a terse dismissal of the idea 'that it is unrestrained to utter with the tongue what it is enough to say with the heart' (Nicetas, 1949, p. 66).<sup>57</sup> But the Fathers did not speak in the same manner, or with one unanimous voice.

A distinct difference in aim and emphasis is observable not only between the four Patristic saints, but very markedly between Augustine and the other three. *De musica*—especially Book VI—is profoundly philosophical and deeply interrogative. It has a strong claim to being the first philosophy of music in the Christian era.<sup>58</sup> But O'Connell's point (1972, p. 90) that Augustine's plea for 'disincarnate understanding' in order to ascend the very highest levels on 'the ladder of temporal carnal beauties,' appears, in the light of Athanasius, Nicetas and Basil, particularly at odds with the actual practices of ecclesial song—and this needs reconciling. More straightforwardly, Athanasius addresses the individual, whereas Nicetas addresses the congregation; and Basil powerfully extols the potent expressiveness of music. On one point, however, there is unanimity: an almost talismanic dependence on the Biblical text, and especially that of the Psalms. In practically all matters pertaining to music—sound, singing, expression; affection, meaning, emotion; education, virtue and the soul;<sup>59</sup> the Psalms are the

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are listed as follows: Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.220); St. Hippolytus (d. c.236); Eusebius Pamphili of Caesarea (c.260-340); St. Hilary of Poitiers (c.310-67); John Chrysostom (345-407), and St. Jerome (c.340-420).

<sup>57</sup> The curtailing of heresy was of enduring concern to the Patristic Fathers. In this matter of 'singing with the heart,' Nicetas argues that not only has the text of Eph. 5:18,19 been misinterpreted, but goes on to prove his point by simple logic and by 'adducing many texts of Holy Scripture' (Nicetas, 1949, p. 66). The Ephesians text, as well as 'the distinction between the new song and the old [Psalm 96:1] became a veritable cliché among the Church Fathers' (Schueller, 1988, p. 215). Stressing the importance of the Psalms, (Smith, 2016, p. 198) states: 'It is axiomatic that since the Psalms are scriptural, they are theologically orthodox as a matter of course. This was especially important in an age when heresy was so rife.'

<sup>58</sup> As well as being a 'psychological system of aesthetic epistemology ... the first of its kind, as it certainly is the first in the history of music aesthetics' (Schuller, 1988, p. 251).

<sup>59</sup> The first seven of these matters (*sound, singing, expression, affection, meaning, emotion and education*) are of enduring concern throughout and across all aesthetic traditions to the present. *Virtue and the soul*, it may be said with Jacques Maritain, fell by the wayside in the debris of Renaissance and Enlightenment notions of beauty. (Maritain, 1962, p. 111).

preeminent vehicle of ‘corporeal’ understanding and a concrete abode of divine reason and its human apprehension—*reason* which Augustine identifies as ‘the hallmark of beauty in the things of sense’ (O’Connell, 1972, p. 67). Our task is to start demarcating the musically beautiful, to appraise the evidence for its actual manifestation, and to assemble some foundational theological-aesthetic values: enduring values, with which Jacques Maritain, as a Thomist, was bound in continuity.<sup>60</sup>

### III – Aesthetic first things: the Psalms

It makes sense to straightaway emphasise the unanimity of thought regarding the Psalms as a truthful mediator of musical expression.<sup>61</sup> For all four writers, this amounts to a divinely inspired, received text becoming a prime arbiter of appropriate human vocal response. There are many ways in which this is shown to be the case, and St. Athanasius, the earliest of our historical figures, covers most. The *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms* is a sweeping exhortation to melodic declamation; all the more insightful as it is aimed at individual, personal response, and not at congregational singing. The Psalms, he begins, possess ‘a certain winning exactitude for those who are prayerful’ (Athanasius, 1980, p. 101). How and why should this be? Harrison, (2013, p.254) notes that the fact of the Psalms being poetry not prose is vital in their applicability to singing: an observation directly made by Athanasius, who states that the ‘freer, less restricted’ verse permits people to ‘express their love to God with all the strength and power they possess’ (Athanasius, 1980, p. 124). This is also logical for quite simple reasons. The more liberated a text becomes from exact discursive language or precise ordinary meaning, the more readily it inheres to music’s natural variableness and expressiveness. Correspondingly, the emotive ‘frequency,’<sup>62</sup> or meaning of a text is likely to emerge more identifiably from less constrained verbal structures; and of course,

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<sup>60</sup> This continuity, expressed through the commentatorial tradition, for instance by John of St Thomas (1589-1644) takes as its starting point the inerrancy of ‘the inspired scriptures ... handed on by the living tradition of the Church ... in communion with the Magisterium’ (Cessario and Cuddy, 2017, p. xvi). Thomism obliges its adherents to stress continuity not novelty, therefore, approaches to musical beauty and the aesthetics of sound must be framed, interpreted or developed accordingly.

<sup>61</sup> In prefacing a passage on the Athanasius text: ‘The one type of music which the fathers did allow—albeit reluctantly and ambivalently—was the chanting of the psalms,’ Harrison (2013, p. 254) somewhat contradictorily downplays the entirely positive role ascribed to the act of singing by Athanasius. Den Boeft (2007, p. 86) draws attention to St. Ambrose’s view (not dissimilar to that of St. Basil) that delight and pleasure are the indispensable condition for best assimilating the moral import of the Psalms; and Nicetas commenting on St Cyprian’s excellent voice states ‘there is something alluring about religious sweetness: and those who sing well have a special grace to attract to religion those who listen to them’ (Nicetas, 1949, p. 75).

<sup>62</sup> Maritain repeatedly makes this point, and Rowan Williams’ (2005) short commentary on Maritain makes the same observation—connecting music and poetry in the sense that music is able to articulate the emotive ‘resonance’ of a text, according to the degree to which that resonance is overtly manifest in the poem.

the act of chanting summons the mind to a particular focus on what is being sung (Harrison, 2013, p. 254), as well as to the sound of the voice—an especially critical aspect.<sup>63</sup>

Already, in principle, the Psalms lend themselves to song, and this truth seems to be universally proclaimed by the Patristic writers and beyond.<sup>64</sup> The musical aesthetic of the Church is guided and shaped, in the first instance, by the ready pairing of music and poetry—hardly a new practice, but one now rendered in a fully non-Classical form;<sup>65</sup> and the Psalms ‘are lyrical poems expressing every sentiment of the human heart and expressing those sentiments Godwards ... at once, universal and personal’ (Kirby, 2011, p. 8). Because what is being chanted is sacred Scripture, the singer is ‘provided a context in which words could safely be allowed to reach their limits’ (Harrison, 2019, p. 125), which is nothing if not an aesthetic aim of poetry itself.<sup>66</sup>

Athanasius emphasises the sheer quality of the received text. From the outset, he stresses not just the origin of the Psalms, as divinely inspired poetic songs, but that singing and melody is correspondingly the only appropriate vehicle for such sacred words. This runs very much counter to the view of some ‘who believed that silent contemplation was the proper approach to God’s worship’ (Schueller, 1988, p. 206), or even that singing was in some way a concession to the weak-minded.

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<sup>63</sup> Lang (1983, p. 10) emphasises that ‘the listeners of antiquity followed a nonpolyphonic musical melody with an intensity unknown to us.’ We might conject that the sophistication of polyphony and technical musical development, over time, dulled the ear to the contemplation of pure vocal sound. Kirby (2011), a Benedictine religious, stresses the importance of very attentive listening to monophonic choral Psalmody, in order to acquire the theological virtues themselves.

<sup>64</sup> Answering the question, ‘should God be praised with song?’ and countering the objections to so doing, Aquinas turns principally to St. Augustine (alongside Aristotle and Boethius), to prove that as long as singing is undertaken with devotional intent, it is a valid and permitted expression of that devotion; moreover, that it may also inculcate piety. This question immediately follows the question ‘should God be praised with the lips?’ Here, Aquinas turns repeatedly to the Psalms to prove that as long as praise is understood as being ‘not for God’s benefit, but for ours’ (acknowledging that God’s essence is unknowable, therefore beyond praise), the lips are validated. The two questions (ST. II-II, q. 91, a 1,2) pertain to each other and build upon the answers of the Patristics.

<sup>65</sup> The fact of the continued practice of chanting the Psalms, even today, testifies to the enduring theological necessity and expressive ‘familiarity’ of the form. Whilst we may not have ‘the music’ of the Patristic era at hand, its fundamental ‘aesthetic’ is remarkably unchanged.

<sup>66</sup> Carol Harrison’s most recent work on St. Augustine (Harrison, 2019) overturns the more traditional view (as well as her own previously more cautious analyses) concerning Augustine’s reticence. The strongest basis for an Augustinian philosophy of music could be said to arise from ‘the context in which Augustine seems to have been much less reluctant to let go of words and to allow the voice to sing out in sound that was not always verbal, and that was the Psalms’ (Harrison, 2019, p. 124). The ‘context’ described here is sacred and poetic.

Moses writes a hymn, and Isaiah is hymning, and Habakkuk prays with a hymn ... In this way the Book of Psalms, possessing the characteristic feature of the songs, itself chants those things in a modulated voice that have been said in the other books ... (Athanasius, 1980, p. 106, 107).

In stating that it comprehensively abridges and sets to music many of the themes of the other sacred books of the Old Testament, as well as adding ‘things of its own that it gives in song along with them,’ Athanasius ascribes a potent metaphysical sense of being to the Psalm text. He continues, ‘it sings the events ... it chants beautifully ... it hymns’ (Athanasius, 1980, p. 102). Taking this at face value—that is, accepting this is not symbolic—we sense that Athanasius imputes to the Psalms the real presence and existence of music, but in a manner of virtuality. This notion of residual musicality, an ontological presence, or potential music, is also implied in St. Basil’s homily on the value of the Psalms in the context of Psalm 1,<sup>67</sup> in which he ascribes ‘musical persuasiveness ... the delight of melody ... melodious music’ (Basil, 2003, p. 57) to the actual design or structure of the Psalm text itself; moreover, that this was the express intention of the Psalm’s divine author, the Holy Spirit. A number of variations on this theme are expressed by different Church Fathers; for instance St. John Chrysostom (345-407), for whom ‘God deliberately put the Psalms into musical form to insure the blending of melody with prophesy’ (Schueller, 1988, p. 254). To a greater or lesser degree, the Patristics regarded the notion of inherent music as a conscious ‘conversion’ of the idea of cosmic music.<sup>68</sup> At any rate, before a mandate to sing, or instruction on how to do it, the very materials of what is to be sung—the Psalms—is unequivocally denoted *as* music, indeed, *as* melody. The implications of this are profound; not least as regarding the role of the individual who is singing or listening to the chant in actuality, in its formal embodiment.<sup>69</sup> Singing, it would appear, is the only proper vehicle of interpretation; but how that is to be undertaken, as we shall see later, is of equal and vital importance, and it should not be done indiscriminately.

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<sup>67</sup> St. Basil predicates his address on exactly the same premise as Athanasius: ‘The prophets, the historians, the law, give each a special kind of teaching, and the exhortation of the proverbs furnishes yet another. But the use and profit of all are included in the book of Psalms’ (Basil, 2003, p. 57). Schueller (1988, p. 217) highlights an extraordinarily early claim by St. Clement of Alexandria in the late second or early third century in which ‘music itself is like “the ecclesiastical symphony at once of the law and the prophets, along with the Gospel.”’

<sup>68</sup> Basil, on one extreme, ‘will have nothing to do with the untruth of the “fabulous invention” and “artificial nonsense” of the music of the spheres’ (Schueller, 1988, p. 224), whereas for others, it is more about transforming the ancient doctrines—in which many were very well schooled.

<sup>69</sup> We can briefly shine an Aristotelian-Thomist light over the thought and practice of the Patristics as regards the essence of the Psalms. The terms *virtuality* and *actuality* are not (as might first be thought) two appearances of an entity in separate orders, but rather, ‘the virtual’ is considered a potential state or stage in the actualisation of an entity in the same order. The Fathers are especially concerned with transmitting the quality of the Psalms as entities already created possessing musical intent or potentiality—created to be musically perceived and materialised.

It is emerging that for the Fathers, a division between music as practically sung in the context of an ecclesial community and music as existing in potentiality or virtuality in the sacred text of the Psalms, does not really exist.<sup>70</sup> Nicetas, early in his address to his congregation, confirms the heavenly authorship of the Psalms, with David as their human interlocutor, and he seems to take for granted the musical qualities already residing in the text. They are a ‘sweet medicine’ (Nicetas, 1949, p. 69) on account of their distinctly melodic properties—properties which facilitate a pleasurable entry to the soul: sentiments echoed by Basil, who in like manner, conflates the qualities of the written texts with the beneficial effects on the individual singer. It is tempting to treat Nicetas (being by far the most practical of our examples) as only retrospectively surveying the perfect utility of the Psalm texts, but this is to miss the subtlety of an aesthetic built on what should rightfully be described as a proto-liturgy of lyrical poems (Kirby, 2011, p. 8). And the liturgy, as it quickly came to be understood by the Church, is a received reality—‘the transcendent and supereminent type of the forms of Christian art; the Spirit of God fashioned it’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 68). In each and every dimension—the metaphysical, the religious, the doctrinal and the practical, we are accumulating evidence that the aesthetics of Classical antiquity are being wholly transfigured.

#### IV – Aesthetic reticence? Saint Augustine

It is time to inquire whether St. Augustine, the most acutely philosophical and most reticent of our examples, similarly attributes musical potency to the Psalm texts, as Athanasius and Basil have described, and as Nicetas has assumed. If this can be established, then we really are close to articulating the beginnings of a theological aesthetic of musical beauty. Famously in *The Confessions* (10.33.50), alongside mentioning Athanasius as a reliable guide in musical matters, it is specifically in the context of chanting the Psalms that Augustine’s well-documented ambivalence towards the emotive qualities of music appears (Harrison, 1992, p. 170). Aspects needing little clarification are Augustine’s reverence for the ‘holy words’ of the Psalm text itself, together with the quandary of his own responses—the dilemma of his ‘aesthetic experience’ on noting such close similitude between the moods of the text and his capacity for voicing the emotions of his spirit. Less clear is the reason as to why he feels the way he does,<sup>71</sup> beyond the obvious concern that devotion could so easily transform into ‘the

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<sup>70</sup> In her comparative study of the Boethian and Kantian accounts of musical beauty, Stone-Davis (2011) underscores the point that to separate sound and theory is to fundamentally misconstrue the reality of ecclesial practice in Christian late antiquity, and the observable reality of human aesthetic experience.

<sup>71</sup> As he has just previously claimed to have been delivered from the ‘pleasures of the ear’ which ‘used to hold me tight in their coils and keep me subject’ (Augustine, 2001, p. 244).

delights of the ear' and 'contentment of the flesh' (Augustine, 1932, p. 234-5). What stimulus or source has prompted such soul searching?

All of our spiritual affections have their proper measures in voice and singing, according to their various kinds, and are stirred up by a sort of hidden kinship with them (Augustine, 2001, p. 245) ... Yet again, when I remember the tears I shed at the Psalmody of Thy Church, in the beginning of my recovered faith;<sup>72</sup> and how at this time, I am moved, not with the singing, but with the things sung, when they are sung with a clear voice and modulation most suitable (Augustine, 1932, p. 235).

The situation is far more profound than a simple matter of whether music gives pleasure, or if it is right to experience it thus. The material elements which Augustine describes are the Psalm texts, the human voice and the act of singing: The spiritual-aesthetic aspects concern pious affect, truthful formal embodiment and qualitative judgement. The two domains are drawn closely together—a merging of the material and the spiritual-aesthetic through a secret congruence. Without stating it as such, Augustine has hesitantly named the Psalms as the preeminent musical mediator, not just for the forms and benefits of chanting them<sup>73</sup> (which he reluctantly admits); but more for 'the things' of the texts and for their virtual musical forms. Augustine senses that the Psalms can be trusted, and that his cognition, emotion and devotion could therefore be virtuously trammelled.<sup>74</sup> Writing almost nine centuries later, Aquinas is more transparent. On the question of whether it is right to praise God in Song, he recognises the issue of aesthetic similitude and virtuous human musical experience—enlisting Aristotle, St. Ambrose and Boethius to answer that 'it is evident that the human soul is moved in various ways according to various melodies of sound' (ST. II-II, 91, a. 2). He continues, in full accord with Augustine.

The soul is distracted from that which is sung by a chant that is employed for the purpose of giving pleasure. But if the singer chant for the sake of devotion, he pays more attention to what he says, both because he lingers more thereon, and because, as Augustine remarks, "each affection of our spirit, according to its variety, has its own appropriate measure in the voice and singing, by some hidden correspondence wherewith it is stirred" (ST. II-II, 91, a. 2 ad 5).

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<sup>72</sup> Connecting Augustine's conversion experience to his first encounters with the music of the Milanese Church, Brennan (1988, p. 268) highlights the spiritual-intellectual dimension of aesthetic experience, suggesting that Augustine 'found emotional reinforcement [of his experience] in a heightened response to the psalms of David. It was this response that Augustine believed set him apart from the Manichees whose doctrines he had now rejected, for he asserts that they could not grasp the truths contained in these canticles.'

<sup>73</sup> This point is universally made and endorsed up to the Reformation; and it is seen in both Luther, who strenuously articulates a mandate for singing in all its forms, and in Calvin, who exhorts the singing of the Psalms for precisely the beneficial effects of doing so.

<sup>74</sup> Harrison (2019, pp. 123-125) expands on the effects of the Psalms on Augustine.



However, the sixth book of *De musica* is more difficult to fathom. It does not share the practical, ecclesial dimension of Athanasius, Nicetas and Basil, but is a rather terse dialogue on the ontology of sound and truthful experience of music. It is ‘concerned with the process of receiving and understanding sound from its source to its effect on the soul’ (Burnett, 2012, p. 17), and beauty is at its heart. Augustine’s high purpose is clearly stated from the beginning: ‘The mind is raised from the consideration of changeable numbers in inferior things to unchangeable numbers in unchangeable truth itself’ (Augustine, 2001, p. 234). Quite implicit is that involvement with music should be an ascent from lower or base things, to higher—even the highest things: from ‘corporeal to incorporeal things’ (p. 326), and an ascent to beauty. We must identify how this ascent translates into musical precepts and actual musical qualities.

Although *De musica* comprehensively addresses musical ‘first things’ very classically through the categories of ‘number,’ and not in respect of respect of scriptural texts,<sup>75</sup> there are two immediate provisos. First, Augustine uses the Ambrosian hymn chant<sup>76</sup> *Deus creator omnium* (‘the creator of all’), to ground his philosophical question theologically. It is a melody which articulates an article of faith, and it expresses the foundation (and culmination) of Augustine’s quest for truthful musical understanding or knowledge of what sounds right. He states that it is sung (Augustine, 2002, p. 349), and by adopting the chant, one known to be familiar in the Church, to embrace his account, Augustine not only recognises its existence and status as a musical text, but far more profoundly, the ontological reasons for its selection. He acknowledges the perfect logic of creation *ex nihilo*, not just as an article of faith but as a truth founded on the observation of things—things which possess ‘being’ absolutely and entirely sufficiently.<sup>77</sup> And from this, stems his initial question to his student.

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<sup>75</sup> It is surely set against the background of actual musical practice—melody, chant, the Psalms—that Augustine philosophises so deeply. Page (2010) notes at the ubiquitous presence of the Psalms, inside and outside the Church, at the time of Augustine and the other Fathers.

<sup>76</sup> The text of *Deus Creator Omnium* is attributed with great certainty to St Ambrose (340-397), but the accompanying chant less so. Brennan (1988, p. 269) stresses the deep significance and emotional impact which the chant of *Deus Creator Omnium* had made upon Augustine at the time of his mother’s death and in the conversion narrative of the *Confessions*.

<sup>77</sup> The quality of oneness is the ground of all recognition, and [realist] philosophies post-Augustine, especially Thomism, find no contradiction and much in continuity. Looking backwards from Augustine, we also see vestiges of the Plotinian influence, whereby ‘music is a symbol of the Object which is a One or Universal-All’ (Schueller, 1988, p. 174). In both respects, via his conversion experience, Augustine perhaps embodies the aesthetic turn from Classical to Christian antiquity more personally than any other figure. We can only ponder the sheer philosophical magnitude of the work that might have been, had ecclesiastical duties not prevented Augustine from writing books 7-12 of *De musica*, in which he proposed to deal with melody. (See Brennan, 1988, p. 270).

Tell me if you will, when we recite this verse, *Deus creator omnium*, where you think the four iambs and twelve times are it consists of. Is it to be said these numbers are only in, the sound heard or also in the hearer's sense belonging to the ears, or also in the act of the reciter, or, because the verse is known, in our memory too? (Augustine, 2002, p. 326).

Less important to us is theory—understanding the ‘iambs,’ the rhythmic measurements, which Augustine himself states to be tortuous and practically unnecessary<sup>78</sup>—but more, the ontology. In one sentence, he starts a nuanced discussion of sound, grounded on what he logically perceives to exist—that is several categories or manifestations of sound, all of which still seem intuitively comprehensible to us, thinking about music, even today.

The consequent and second proviso is the observation that Augustine’s inquiry into species of sound cannot easily be pressed into a post-Cartesian mould. The distinctiveness of his thought transcends ingrained notions of music construed in sharply-defined ‘production, transmission’ and ‘reception’ terms. It is a world apart from empty forms or indirect reflection on the mind’s representations by *a priori* functions of judgement, as an idealist aesthetic demands. And by referring everything back to ‘*Deus creator omnium*,’ the ‘one’ supereminent source of understanding, we are obliged to conceive of an aesthetic of musical beauty fully unencumbered by enlightenment thought.

Augustine’s categories of musical understanding (the different number types) which he continually modifies in the sixth book of *De musica*, overlap and exist within each other. All are subjected to the sense of rational judgement or reason, and ultimately, in the light of divine reason. But to take the view of O’Connell (1978) and to an extent, Harrison’s (1992) early work that Augustine offers a singularly Neo-Pythagorean ‘numerical’ account, devoid of ‘real music’ is to completely miss the sense of virtuality—potential music, which is very strongly evident in the text.<sup>79</sup> It may be daring to contemplate Augustine in this manner: to completely dismantle the division between music ‘as it exists as an intellectual activity’ and music as ‘a sonic manifestation’ (Burnett, 2012, p. 16), instead suggesting music as a virtual or actual incidence of the same *esse*.<sup>80</sup> Harrison (2019) firmly points this way, and for us, considering Augustine

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<sup>78</sup> In reference to *De musica*, books 1-5 (Augustine, 2002, p. 325).

<sup>79</sup> Whilst clearly outlining Augustine’s ‘numerical’ preoccupation, Schueller’s (1988, pp. 246-256) survey of the sixth book of *De musica* falls into the same trap, failing to even mention *Deus creator omnium*, and thus severely restricting his analysis in respect of actual music. Harrison (2019), though, significantly alters the emphasis (and her own) in recent Augustine scholarship with her direct focus on musical expression, and quite rightly describes *Deus creator* as ‘the ground bass of *De musica*’ (p. 102). See also Harrison (2019, pp. 33-37).

<sup>80</sup> Meaning a shared essential nature from which the two manifestations (the virtual and the actual) are distinguishable, yet not separable. This seems a creative solution, and one which definitely points to the processes of musical creation, bringing music into being (composition).

in this manner draws him closer to the other Patristic saints, and pertinently, to notions of musical beauty in the mediaeval and later ages.

At the end of book 6 Augustine returns to *Deus Creator Omnium*. Voicing and hearing it again he is aware of the way it has operated on his thought at a number of different levels: it is a correct and pleasing line of poetry ... it is music, rhythmically ordered and harmoniously pleasing, lending itself to sung performance; (Harrison, 2019, p. 60).

In Athanasius, Nicetas, Basil *and* Augustine, the incarnate aesthetic has a clear beginning. Music is no longer of the cosmos,<sup>81</sup> and neither is it a sounding reflection of eternal paradigms. It is of God. It is given form and concrete expression, first and foremost in the poetry-music of the Davidic texts, the Psalms—which already fully possess the virtual materials necessary for rendering in song,<sup>82</sup> as well as possessing divine reason (the ‘hallmark of beauty’). Even the confirmed Platonist should find little difficulty reconciling the Classical with the Christian aesthetic, at least in principle, mainly because the medium of the Psalms already gives the singer the highest possible view of expression. It is then up to the singer to find himself in accordance with the specific sentiment of the Psalm in question and render it suitably, always remembering that the Psalm itself is inherently good (Nicetas, 1949, p. 71). Augustine will offer us more, but at this early stage, he confers an ontology—a sense of being—on the musical deliberations of the other Patristic saints. He argues for the fundamental existence *of* music, albeit in remoter terms. Now we turn to music as it exists in actuality; taken as a verb, not a noun, and here the Fathers have much more to say about musical beauty.

## V – Sound, singing and expression in melody

We have seen the pre-eminence of the Psalms<sup>83</sup> as (a) regarding their role in forming a clear divide between Christian and Classical aesthetic modes of understanding; (b) being the

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<sup>81</sup> It is perhaps better to state that music subsists within an order where everything (*omnium*) has one, single divine source. This adequately differentiates the Patristic aesthetic from the Pythagorean-Platonic, but importantly, does not negate the very real experience of music’s transcendent and supra-rational character. It is only in the passage of time, with the corresponding development of theology and philosophy culminating in St. Thomas, that a synthesis of the Classical and the Christian, perplexing to Augustine (Cole, 2008), is able to provide a more sophisticated and permissive musical aesthetic in which delight becomes the key factor. (Viladesau, 2000). A startling poetic allusion to, and mingling of the cosmic account with the Christian appears in John Donne’s sonnet ‘*Annunciation*,’ in which God is referred to as ‘*All*,’ together with the creative inertia of ‘*The spheres*’ (Carey, 1996, p. 197).

<sup>82</sup> Kirby (2011, p.7) underscores the elevated status of the Psalmody of the Divine Office, as exists in religious communities today. Our discussion also recalls the metaphysical roots of Gregorian melody—taken to be a divinely-authored yet humanly uttered chant, which is likewise afforded pre-eminence in the Divine Office, as well as being, according to Maritain, the spiritual archetype of *all* melody. ‘Artistic creation does not copy God’s creation, but continues it’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 60).

<sup>83</sup> See Smith (2016, p. 198-206) for a further survey highlighting the complete universality of Psalm usage.

concrete materials of musical potentiality; and (c) enclosing the ‘source code’<sup>84</sup> of musical beauty. It is tempting to develop a fuller ‘aesthetic of the Psalter,’ and indeed Athanasius (1980, pp. 113-123) provides an exhaustive list of the ways in which the ‘moods’ of particular Psalms inhere to specific pious intention and the vocal expression thereof. But we must now focus on the sound of music itself, and with the Fathers, attempt to determine what separates the good from bad, better from worse, the beautiful from what is not—all judged within the bounds of reason; for appraisal of sound is always accompanied by judgement. We discover much consensus; from general aesthetic observations and criteria, to explicitly detailed instruction as to how to sing beautifully.

A point that could earlier have been made, is that from a theological-ecclesial perspective grounded in the Patristic era, ‘music’ almost always means ‘singing,’ and ‘sound’ is almost exclusively denoted as vocal sonority or quality. Naturally, there are exceptions, often fascinating asides and insights,<sup>85</sup> but predominantly it is the voice which is considered the appropriate, best, most worthy vehicle for personal edification and divine worship. It is the human voice through which the melodic aesthetic of the Church is circumscribed. The practical question remains: how should singing be done? ‘It is fitting,’ advises Athanasius (1980, p. 123) ‘for the Divine Scripture to praise God not in compressed speech alone, but also in the voice that is richly broadened’—a process to which he accords strength and power. This suggests that understanding is enlarged in a milieu where time is extended, even extravagantly, and in which the melodic incantation of words is best preserved by the memory. The logic of *De musica* helps us to reflect on this, as Augustine develops his discussion concerning the quality of the *recordabiles* or ‘memorial numbers,’ in accordance with his precept that what resides is known.

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<sup>84</sup> To borrow a technological term from the world of computer programming.

<sup>85</sup> For instance, St Basil’s view of plucked and hammered stringed instruments: the Psaltery in which the player’s hands appropriately reach upward to the strings and to the ‘the source of its sounds above’ (Basil, 2003, p. 58); as opposed to hammered instruments, whereby an unnecessary mediator (metal hammers) interfere in divine action. Or that of Athanasius who, in two instances, refers to musical instruments only analogously—‘thus as in music there is a plectrum, so the man becoming himself a stringed instrument and devoting himself completely to the Spirit may obey in all his members and emotions, and serve the will of God’ (Athanasius, 1980, p. 124). ‘Moreover, the praising of God in well-tuned cymbals and harp and ten-stringed instrument was again a figure and sign of the parts of the body coming into natural concord’ (Athanasius, 1980, p. 125). The consonance he describes is made corporeal only by ‘beautifully singing.’ Nicetas (1949, pp. 71-72) dogmatically rejects the use of all instruments, giving one simple theological reason for so doing—they were abolished with other ceremonials of the Old Testament, and have no place in the rites of the Church. ‘The voice is a better substitute.’ Holsinger (2001, p. 37) points out that musicology now accepts these references and others to be ‘allegorical interpretations,’ and not, as formerly thought, evidence of actual use of musical instruments.

Melodic awareness arises as a result of what is, at some point, heard or thought—in ‘the memory of things made’ (Augustine, 2002, p. 330). The memory *sees* the diversity of things—either in thought or movement we ‘enact’ what we have previously ‘enacted’ (p.347), and we hear what we have previously heard or sensed. The *recordabiles* are therefore clearly related to other types of sounds and require ontological equivalence with those types for melodic matter to be first imprinted. Most important of all, memory itself comes to the aid of the judicial sense, which is nothing less than claiming that melody procures rightful judgement of the good, the true and the beautiful. So, it is all the more fitting that words are thus to be ‘richly broadened.’

Perplexingly, Augustine does not link the practical act of articulating music with memory. This is quite an inconsistency, for it would appear to anyone as a strikingly important ‘type’ for the retention and recall of the ‘numbers.’ Early in the dialogue, he finds that only sounds which exist or are heard (*sonantes*), and the auditory sense itself (*occursores*) inform the memory. As he reframes his categories, it becomes plausible that the act of chanting (*progressores*) may educate the memory. It all hinges on whether the sounds themselves are forgotten and die, or are retained and vivified in a subsequent act of judgement. There is incompleteness in Augustine’s thought here, but the other Fathers elevate practice for the very reason that memory is enlightened most effectively by actual chanting; and in a reciprocal manner, that the practice of singing Divine Liturgy informs the memory supremely well.<sup>86</sup>

Returning to practicalities, Athanasius frequently interchanges his language—‘song, hymn, chant, recite’—but it seems unprofitable to speculate just what this means in melodic terms. What is certain however, is that from his highly detailed listing of the various soul-emotions, their specific correlates in the Biblical text, and the appropriate vocal ‘stirrings’ (Athanasius, 1980, p. 114]) of the singer, a variety of melodic devices and expressive intonations are not just permitted, but thoroughly endorsed. Singing is to be expansive *and* expressive. Melodies that sound ‘suitably religious’ (Nicetas, 1949, p.74) are to be desired and ‘falsely extravagant’ melodic gestures (the theatrical) are to be rejected. This has slight neo-platonic resonances, but we are still firmly ordered to Christian ends—the text following yet another injunction to delight in the Psalms, nourish with prayer and ‘sing with the intelligences.’ Nicetas does not prohibit expressive, even emotive song per-se: rather he subtly distinguishes between authentic and inauthentic sound and expression. Offering his congregation advice on how a sweet-

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<sup>86</sup> We have taken the liberty of ‘ironing out’ Augustine’s inconsistency.

sounding unity is achieved, he counsels that a good singer imparts many qualities: ‘joy, heavenly grace, loud with songs, full memory, and a flexible musical voice ... there is something alluring about religious sweetness: and those who sing well have a special grace to attract to religion those who listen to them’ (Nicetas, 1949, p.74). Three things are so far clear. First, that melody is understood in the prime instance aesthetically—what sounds good *is* good. Second, that memory is intrinsic to melodic comprehension, and third, that sound, singing and expression are ordered solely within virtuous ecclesial and pious personal practice.<sup>87</sup> As a contemporary source puts it: ‘The voice must articulate the sacred words with care and reverence. The mission of the voice is to prepare, in a kind of renewal of the mystery of the incarnation, an acoustical body for the Divine Word’ (Kirby, 2011, pp. 17-18).<sup>88</sup>

The Fathers are concerned for the precise vocal quality of what is chanted—how the voice is regulated and blends, in what Athanasius terms the ‘modulated voice’ (Athanasius, 1980, p.107). The typical word used to describe a melody that is pleasing in sound ‘without discordant notes’ and ‘without harshness’ is *harmony*; and we are to avoid, according to Nicetas, sound that is unbecomingly loud or too quiet—we are to sing with others in the production of a melody that is unified in tone and timbre. We are to shun notes which in some way offend the natural sense of rightness, and instead seek to express musically sounds that are agreeable and right for our nature and those which are right for God. Turning again to *De musica*, we see a distinct set of Augustinian aesthetic terms and values connected with the judicial sense: *Fittingness, agreement, harmonious operation, equality, evenness* (Augustine, 2002, p. 345); and God is designated the author of these actual properties.<sup>89</sup> Sounds are judged against or in combination with other sounds, but this is in no way to advocate polyphony; for as Augustine states ‘how can what cannot sound together be heard together?’ (Augustine, 2002, p. 346), and very importantly, be understood together?<sup>90</sup> This directive undergirds all liturgical song of the

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<sup>87</sup> These three precepts entirely harmonise with later notions of beauty and expression, for instance as found in St. Thomas’s famous definition of beauty—‘that which pleases when seen’—which is understood by raising spiritual and moral beauty over the natural or physical. (Scott-Sevier, 2012, pp. viii, ix).

<sup>88</sup> In which terms, the element of melody claims the highest prize for its ability to practically embody a metaphysical conversion of the senses, or ‘a theological articulation of the natural sense of hearing which we have seen intuitively judges music on the basis of whether it is pleasing or offensive’ (Harrison, 2019, p. 59).

<sup>89</sup> Previously, Augustine (2002, p. 327) has offered a set of antitheses, in terms which describe precise human responses to the sounds (sounding numbers) of music which is less than good: *Absurdity, disapproval, disagreeable*. However, as has been indicated, to view this in terms of ‘listening’ as contrasted to ‘creating’ is to misconstrue Augustine’s complexity, and, at times, his uncertainty.

<sup>90</sup> An interesting challenge to musicians of later centuries, for instance at the onset of polyphony in the Notre Dame School of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Concern for comprehension as well as vocal sound was at the heart of debate as to what was beautiful or distasteful—the exact worries of the Patristic age being played out in the mediaeval era.

Patristic age, and is an aesthetic criterion that demands the use of modulated, regulated, unison chant. The ever-practical Nicetas advises the weaker singer, or those with inexact pitch or tone to blend in an undertone with a more secure melodist (Nicetas, 1949, p. 74), and that one should not chant faster or slower than another.

We can conclude with certainty that melody is the preeminent musical element—the one through which theological comprehension is manifested in beautiful, delightful sound. In fact, we can point towards an experience which, over time, will become ever more pertinent to a theological aesthetic of musical beauty—that of *delight* itself. St. Basil does not hesitate to state the beneficial effects of music on the body and soul, and of the instructional, educational benefits of singing; for in his account, pleasure and delight have a high calling. Of chanting the melodies of the Psalms he waxes lyrical:

To beginners it is an alphabet, to all who are advancing an improvement, to the perfect a confirmation. It is the voice of the church. It gladdens feasts. It produces godly sorrow. It brings a tear even from a heart of stone. A psalm is angels' work, the heavenly conversation, the spiritual sacrifice. Oh, the thoughtful wisdom of the Instructor who designed that we should at one and the same time sing and learn to our profit! It is thus that His precepts are imprinted on our souls. A lesson that is learned unwillingly is not likely to last, but all that is learned with pleasure and delight effects a permanent settlement in our souls (Basil, 2003, p. 58).

In this context, St. Ambrose (340-397)<sup>91</sup> needs mentioning. Den Boeft (2007, p. 86) spots a subtle divergence between Basil and St. Ambrose; claiming that for Basil, delight is 'a well-chosen ingredient of the presentation' (of chanting) whereas Ambrose's view that '*delectatio* belongs to the very core, not subordinated to the content, but cooperating on equal terms,' appears to confirm Ambrose as the Saint with the fewest scruples about the sensual delights of melody: 'In a psalm' he continues, 'instruction vies with beauty. We sing for pleasure. We learn for our profit' (Ambrose, Ps. 1, 9-12: CSEL, 64, 7, 9-10).<sup>92</sup> But the ways in which a melody

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<sup>91</sup> Schueller (1988, pp. 230-233) emphasises the way in which Ambrose typified a more overt blend of the cosmological and Biblical than did the other Fathers, especially in regard to Old Testament imagery. However, in Ambrose is a fulsome endorsement of communal Psalm singing, and Augustine acknowledges the success of Ambrosian hymn melodies. (See Harrison, 2019, pp. 33-34).

<sup>92</sup> Den Boeft (1993, p. 87) continues: 'Here delight and pleasure, *delectatio* and *suavitas*, are no longer merely an asset, they are indispensable. Right at the beginning of the *Commentary on Psalm 118* Ambrose expresses this in even stronger terms: "sweetness is the hallmark of every 'moral' teaching, yet most of all the ears are delighted and the mind entranced by the pleasing sound of poetry and the sweetness of Psalmody." Melody, interpreted in this light, is afforded exceptional purity—something all the Fathers advocated in their edicts on singing. Once more, we see pre-Christian antiquity being overhauled. In the *Philebus*, Plato (1995, p. 345) conjects as to the pleasures which pertain to absolutely beautiful sounds, terming them 'a divine class;' but only in Christian antiquity is this divinity circumscribed in absolute terms.

impresses upon the body, the mind and the emotions, and the experience of this in the participant, are of equal concern to the Patristic Fathers. Here, their commentaries are still more profound and ever more relevant to an aesthetic that reaches beyond the mediaeval era.

## **VI – Affection, meaning and emotion (via the Psalms)**

The question of music's affective potency—its natural expressiveness—is of just as much concern to the Patristics as it was to their Classical forebears; but by now it is evident that they circumscribe things differently. Music understood as a medium for articulating the motions or emotions of the human soul is an enduring, multifaceted trope in philosophical thought. From the classical realist perspective (now profoundly modified under the incarnate aesthetic of the new Christian 'philosophy') the Psalms once again hold the key to understanding; for the Fathers, quite literally.

Via the Psalms, affect is chaperoned by comprehension and edification; the singer is taught the emotions of the soul, as Athanasius says, 'on the basis of that which affects him and by which he is constrained, he also is enabled by this book to possess the image deriving from the words' (Athanasius, 1980, p. 107). This is an astounding precept: to claim that above and beyond the Biblical text, an affective image exists which is grasped, or is emotionally identified by chanting a melody. Athanasius is quite clear that the Psalms teach the singer *how* to feel and sing truthfully. Basil, Ambrose and Nicetas concur, although in not as detailed a manner. Furthermore, the singer recognises the Psalms as being his own words: 'And the one who hears is deeply moved, as though he himself were speaking, and is affected by the words of the songs, as if they were his own songs.' (Athanasius, 1980, p. 109). Emotive response in the act of singing is not repudiated: in fact, it is guided, welcomed and justified. Athanasius, Nicetas, Basil and especially Ambrose share none of Augustine's aesthetic crises concerning the pleasures of the ear: 'They also say that the people have been mesmerized by the poetical force of my hymns. I have no inclination at all to deny that. Great is this poetry and more powerful than anything else...' (Ambrose, in Den Boeft, 1993, p. 53). It would be wrong to attribute emotive poetic power and knowledge to the Psalm text alone, when Ambrose so evidently attributes it to the aesthetic experience of chanting the text.

Athanasius reaches further still in the direction of pure metaphysics, suggesting that the melodic incantation of a text grants superior knowledge of self (as well as of God). 'And it seems to me that these words become like a mirror to the person singing them, so that he might perceive himself and the emotions of his soul, and thus affected, he might recite them'



(Athanasius, 1980, p. 111). Melody is confirmed as *the* musical element via which the inner subjective—the nebulous meanings of the emotive life—take on expressive form and are brought to the fore, potentially with some poetical force, as Ambrose recounts. Harrison (2019, p. 134-135) tentatively suggests that pure sound alone permitted ‘the heart’s affections to be voiced’ in response to the Psalm. We really are in a position to confirm *melody* as a quite unique component to an aesthetic of musical beauty.

In Maritain’s mature masterwork *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (1953) and elsewhere,<sup>93</sup> the author interprets melody in precisely this manner. The disclosure of truth accompanies the formulation of a melody, the recitation of which effects a chastening or purification-by-recognition (confession) in the musician; and all this is enabled by the Holy Spirit who ‘composed’ the text in the first place and who truthfully mediates its musical reading. In melody, subject and object effectively merge—indeed, the subjective is afforded real epistemological status. Athanasius is slightly unclear whether ‘the composition’ refers to the Biblical text (with David as amanuensis) or the melody as it is intoned by the singer; but in light of our previous discussion concerning the virtuality of the Psalm texts, it matters little either way. There is convergence around the divine role played in reception and intelligent understanding; and clear divergence from the Classical conception—once again we are dealing with concrete, embodied forms, not types and shadows.

And yet there is more. The Patristic Fathers submit that all scriptures teach the virtues, but that the Psalms ‘somehow possess the perfect image for the soul’s course of life’ (Athanasius, 1908, p.112). A very holistic view of the human person is quite evident in Augustine’s *De musica*,<sup>94</sup> and he attributes great worth to the body.<sup>95</sup> Athanasius is clear that ascent in virtue and the moral life begins with observation and understanding ‘the emotions of the soul’ as an immediate representation, even imitation, of the truths to be subsequently assimilated

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<sup>93</sup> It should be noted that from Aquinas (and centuries of theological and philosophical advancement) Maritain develops a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between subject and object in the formulation of music than the Patristic Fathers could ever imagine; but the essential similarity between Athanasius’s and Maritain’s definition of melody is quite startling. Later chapters will return to this theme.

<sup>94</sup> The singing voice or ‘the practice and operation of the person pronouncing’ (Augustine, 2002, p. 328) firmly connects the physiological realities of the human body (it breathes, blood circulates) with the operation of the soul and the will. Augustine paints a holistic picture of the human person—body, soul, flesh, blood, the auditory faculty, and so on. He observes that the physiological body is alive with rhythm, but it is also vital that the soul resides and operates upon the natural body when willed to do so. Under these conditions, the articulation of music arises. It is noteworthy that of all the number species in his initial discussion, only that concerning the act of recitation (later termed *Progressores*) is denoted as the soul *producing* the number.

<sup>95</sup> For Augustine, the value of the body, which the soul uses to ‘animate and govern’, is granted on account of a sacramental, incarnational theology. From the condition of Christ, the body is granted dignity, although the soul, now ‘operating in mortal flesh feels the passion of bodies’ (Augustine, 2002, p. 332).

(remembering it is the Psalms which guide this, not unconditioned emotional expression). Athanasius is quite specific, even prescriptive, in that each and every human condition has an appropriate language-analogue in the Psalter, and that melodic-emotive expression outside of this will not elevate the soul.

He who recites the Psalms is uttering the rest as his own words, and each sings them as if they were written concerning him, and he accepts them and recites them not as if another were speaking, nor as if speaking about someone else. But he handles them as if he is speaking about himself (Athanasius, 1980, p. 110).

In melody, then, is embodied immediate and emotional affective response; but also intellectual apprehension, knowledge and self-identification.

## **VII – Virtue and the ascent of the soul: the ultimate end**

It makes sense though to end with St Augustine. In such a short overview, it is impossible to adequately describe the scope, structure, or meaning of *De musica*. All that we have so far mentioned—continuity of aesthetic thought, the talismanic qualities of the Psalms, qualitative judgement of the voice, and singing as embodying the rightful state of the harmonious soul; all of this points to the reality that music is ordered towards and by the virtuous person, and that beauty or delight is a manifestation of such ordering. Moreover, it is a way of procuring it.<sup>96</sup> Sing to be good—be good to sing, is one way of putting it. It is all very corporeal.

*De musica* is best viewed as an ascending spiral of musical knowledge, the ultimate end of which does indeed witness the annihilation of all temporal and corporal elements (O’Connell, 1978), as the soul strives for the Beatific vision itself—unity with God. Along the way, however, Augustine does not shun these self-same elements, but strives to find ways whereby a species of sound is appraised on its own, in its relationship to others, is judged as greater or lesser; and ultimately, the judicial sense itself—along with the beauty and delight which makes it known—is interrogated and subjected to reason. ‘Do you think it’s the same thing to be delighted by sense and to appraise by reason?’ Augustine (2002, p. 349) asks his disciple—a question of bewildering complexity. We are assured, though, that whilst the soul may be better than the body, truth still emanates from the body and Augustine tells his student to be amazed

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<sup>96</sup> Maritain (1962, p. 173, n. 66) proffers the definition: ‘Strictly speaking, beauty is the radiance of all the transcendentals united.’ This is harmonious with the account of musical beauty described here, wherein the ascent to truth, via the judgement and apprehension of what is good, manifests specific, nameable and practical musical qualities for which no other word than *beauty* suffices. ‘Perception of knowledge is to receive the splendor of truth’ (Wilson, 2017, p. 229).

at the corresponding elevation of the corporeal ‘numbers’ and the true expression of form that is possible notwithstanding the fallen state of humanity (Augustine, 2002, p. 332). Again, this is ample evidence of a completely reconstituted aesthetic.<sup>97</sup> ‘To dismiss Augustine’s treatment of music as overly intellectual, rationalistic, dry, or mathematical is therefore to misunderstand the nature of *On Music*’ (Harrison, 2011, p. 41), and it is to vitiate the spiritual-intellectual basis for the aesthetic of those who followed, be it Aquinas or Maritain.

We have gleaned from just a few significant writings in the Patristic era that musical beauty can be identified and characterised. It can be differentiated from what came before in antiquity, and it can be marked as the ground of what was to come—a transcendental aesthetic, but one ordered to intelligibility and embodiment.

I would insist that the Patristic and Medieval eras did indeed possess and actively practice a musical aesthetic, and that this aesthetic cannot properly be characterized as or reduced to a “mathematical comprehension of music.” To the contrary, it was a profoundly incarnational aesthetic whose adherents often found a truly musical beauty in the passions and movements of human flesh—in the “expressiveness” and the “physical and sensuous nature” of musical sounds and bodies. Patristic writers on music and musical phenomena were motivated not by an overweening desire to escape the flesh, but rather by the challenge of reconciling the pleasures of musical embodiment with the incarnational religiosity they practiced (Holsinger, 2001, p. 30).

It is in the challenge of reconciling body to spirit and feeling to understanding, that Aquinas’s injunction concerning philosophy seeking the truth of things finds its clear paternity in the Patristic Saints. Athanasius, Nicetas, Basil and Ambrose flesh out an aesthetic of musical beauty, and Augustine presents its superlative condition: a condition in which reason is ultimately the unfettered mind of God within humans,<sup>98</sup> known by nature—an actually impossible situation.<sup>99</sup> The Fathers understood that we have been sewn into an order where we

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<sup>97</sup> Augustine still finds worth in the temporal, the corporeal, for it is kept by order and ‘adorned in its own beauty, although of the lowest kind.’ Whilst he cannot escape the Platonic mind-body distinction, the former does not negate the latter—it could never do so, as the scriptures upon which Augustine is reliant, do not permit this. The body is God’s creature. The numbers of our sinful mortality ‘are beautiful in their own kind.’ ‘They can be less and less beautiful, but they can’t lack beauty entirely’ (all Augustine, 2002, p. 375).

<sup>98</sup> After defining reason as the ability to judge the good from bad, the better from worse, the best from the worst; the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* (ed. Spearing, Ch.64, p. 90) reminds us of the postlapsarian impossibility of perfect judgement by human nature. This is the root of the aesthetic dilemma Augustine experiences in *The Confessions*, and which he rigorously interrogates in *De musica* 6.

<sup>99</sup> As John Donne points out in the sonnet *Batter my Heart* (Carey, 1996, p. 204), reason, the divine ‘Viceroy’ is no longer able to operate perfectly in the human person. Donne’s remedy—the annihilation of bodily action and submission of personal autonomy to divine love—recalls the ascent to which Augustine aspires. Harrison (2019, p. 151) ends her recent publication with Augustine’s description in the homily on Psalm 41, of the person ‘drawn towards the melodious and delightful strains of music coming from the eternal house of God in the heavens.’ God ‘who has always sung, and will always continue to sing, in and through us, uniting us with

see through a glass darkly,<sup>100</sup> unable to perceive ‘the harmony and beauty of the connected work’ (Augustine, 2002, p. 355) and through our clouded vision, mistake order for disorder, quality for inequality. Allowing for this, we propose an Augustinian answer to the familiar music-philosophy conundrum: “Where, or in what, does the music (content) reside?” The answer might be that the music lives and is experienced as long as the corporeal numbers sound. At the Augustinian apex, we would experience an entire, completely whole musical work, in all its depth and variety, ‘face-to-face’ and in a non-temporal revelation of truth. The theology of this is unmistakable, and the implications of this for aesthetics in later eras is enthralling. We have passed from virtuality, through actuality to an epiphany of the highest possible order.

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each other and with Himself, in joy and love’ (p. 150). Hart (2003) concurs, emphasising the continuity of creation in musical apprehension as a distinctive mark of an incarnate aesthetic, as contrasted with the Classical. ‘Creation is not, that is, a music that explicates some prior and undifferentiated content within the divine, nor the composite order that is, of necessity, imposed upon some intractable substrate so as to bring it into imperfect conformity with an ideal harmony; it is simply another expression or inflection of the music that eternally belongs to God...’ (Hart, 2003, p. 276).

<sup>100</sup> I Cor, 13:12.

## Chapter 3

### Music in ‘Art and Scholasticism’

People who pursue the general problems of art have to be steeped in their subject matter, so they tend to speak the language of artists, which is largely metaphorical and consequently less responsible and consistent than philosophers, but often more authoritative ... especially musicians (Langer, 1970, p. 202).

This chapter is an analysis of *Art and Scholasticism* (1920; 1927; 1935), Jacques Maritain’s first aesthetic work. We begin to question the notion that Maritain ‘speaks of music only in asides, in passing as it were’ (Nelson, 2000, p. 165), enigmatically or as allusion.<sup>101</sup> We undertake a qualitative, thematic appraisal of all Maritain’s references to, and applications of music, including those in his end notes—which are as extensive as the text itself. It must be acknowledged that these references are not numerous; in fact they are comparatively scarce—moments even; yet it will be shown that they are highly significant in their placement and implications. Music is invoked for a reason. To assist in interpreting these moments, notable contemporaries are enlisted. The Thomist philosopher and Historian Étienne Gilson will be mentioned in passing; but most prominently, we turn directly to the composer Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), who, writing in the *Poetics of Music* (1947),<sup>102</sup> exhibited ‘a considerable debt to Maritain’ (Fallon, 2002, p. 290), and who, in the line of illustrious ‘philosophising’ artists, supplies an ideal companion text and practical reflection on *Art and Scholasticism*.

Paradoxically, by superimposing Maritain’s work over Stravinsky’s, the composer is shown to be both responsible and consistent; and notwithstanding the fact of Maritain’s unfamiliarity with the repertoires and techniques of music,<sup>103</sup> we propose that *Art and Scholasticism* begins an account of music which Maritain progressively unfolds over the subsequent three decades. It is a rich, metaphysical account—one that forms an intrinsic component to his theory of art

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<sup>101</sup> This has insufficient support to count as a majority view, but nonetheless the notion persists that Maritain’s comments on music are ‘naïve, fanciful’ (Fallon, 2002, p.288), and a less-than-significant component to his general aesthetics.

<sup>102</sup> Together with *An Autobiography* (first published in 1935), *The Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* represents the most comprehensive account of the composer’s thought prior to leaving Paris. Valérie Dufour’s excellent account of the intellectual collaboration between Stravinsky, Pyotr Suvchinsky and Roland-Manuel in the production of the *Poétique musicale*, whilst concluding that ‘the final work expresses Stravinsky’s wishes and can be considered a fully authoritative work of the composer’ (Dufour, 2013, p. 251), fails to mention Maritain as the overt philosophical influence behind the text.

<sup>103</sup> Maritain’s description of himself as essentially just a philosopher working at ideas (Maritain, 1930, p. 87, 1953, p. 4) is a frequently employed, disarming, but accurate apologetic. In the theological sphere too, he is at pains to stress his status as ‘a layman’ not ‘a religious’, whilst following Gilson in stressing ‘the influence of faith in philosophizing’ (McInerney, 2003, p. 110).

(Fallon, 2002, p. 286) and which is inseparable from it.<sup>104</sup> The present chapter defines and interprets the scholastic context in which music is to be understood—in particular, what Maritain really means when he alludes to musical terms and elements, or refers to certain composers.

Concomitant with Maritain's firmly Thomist outlook, the theological significance of music is never far from the discussion. The chapter highlights the distinctions which Maritain makes between fine art-music (the realm of the poetic which aims at beauty), and liturgical music (the realm of the spiritual-angelic which aims at divine worship and human edification). Whilst Maritain's aesthetic pre-eminently concerns the creation of *art* in and of itself, its creation is not to be construed as being a separate form of creativity—the mediaeval notion of an artisan makes no such distinctions (Maritain, 1935, p. 21). Nor is it wholly divided from the liturgical-ecclesiological—aesthetic virtue firmly pointing, as it does, to a unity with the moral order and the theological virtues (Lourié, 1929, pp. 5-6).

## **I – Art and Scholasticism: the source text**

Detailed scrutiny of *Art and Scholasticism* is necessary in respect of music, first because there is nothing developed in any of Maritain's subsequent aesthetics which undermines or contradicts the precepts established within it. Neither is there a precedent. McNerny (2003) stresses the originality of the text, proposing it to have created a new and separate genre: going beyond the reach of Aquinas in order to demonstrate the relevance of Thomism to aesthetics. A Thomist inspired philosophy of art, much less one mentioning music, simply did not exist. Thus, in such a unique work, Thomist metaphysics provided Maritain with 'the means for the development of a philosophy of art, not as a matter of recovery, but of discovery' (Nelson, 2000, p. 162). *Art and Scholasticism* is the foundational framework upon which later works build and rely, and with which familiarity is therefore a prerequisite.

Advancing three decades to the beginning of Maritain's foremost work in aesthetics *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Maritain, 1953), in which Thomist rigour is softened, the author ascribes special significance to music—even pre-eminence.<sup>105</sup> But whilst there is no single

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<sup>104</sup> From the start of *Creative Intuition* (p. 4), Maritain claims not to be articulating a treatise on art, so it is wise to try and interpret musical references across all his works firstly in a philosophical or theological sense, then in a musicological sense, acknowledging the flexibility and adaption of vocabulary which this will entail.

<sup>105</sup> 'Music is perhaps the most significant of all. But music, I think requires a separate, special analysis' (Maritain, 1963, p. 4). Maritain's statement bears nothing more than a superficial identification with Schopenhauer, whose theory, labelled 'the anti-intellectualist deification of music' (Maritain, 1923, p. 130), is given as one 'blossoming' of Kant's error with regard to the vital relation of beauty to the intelligence.

book, document, tract or chapter in which this opinion is formulated and expounded as a unified thesis, the beginning of Maritain's musical thought does coincide with the publication of the startling and influential *Art and Scholasticism* in 1920. The three original French texts are those of 1920, 1927 and 1935; the latter two editions being Maritain's own revisions of the original work. The translations utilised in the present chapter, corresponding to the above, are those of 1923 by J. O'Connor; 1930 by J.F. Scanlan, which included *the Frontiers of Poetry* as an appendix; and 1962 by J.W. Evans, with *Frontiers* now as a text equal in its own right. The majority of references come from this final edition, but where differences of emphasis, meaning or vocabulary is noted, the previous translations are also utilised.

Musical references are found at judicious points across the text, and it is within its densely meticulous scholastic exposition of art, in which references to musical meaning, musical elements, composition, Gregorian chant and no fewer than eight composers are to be found.<sup>106</sup> Notoriously evasive terms such as *imitation*, *sign* or *symbol*, *classicism* and *expression* are encountered, and the essential structures of an account of beauty in music are put in place. This conforms to the thrust of Maritain's general aesthetics, which he makes immediately clear adheres to the Schoolmen's emphasis on making (Maritain, 1962, p. 4). Music is nearly always construed from its first human origins, the composer.<sup>107</sup> This vitally important distinguishing marker places the text in stark contrast to aesthetics' preoccupation with the subjective experience of the listener. From this perspective it is both logical and in keeping with the spirit of Maritain's own methods<sup>108</sup> to appraise *Art and Scholasticism* in frequent dialogue with the most significant musician to fall under its influence—one who demonstrably embodied an intellectual, yet practical account of the creative process: Igor Stravinsky.

## II – Art as an intellectual virtue: harmony and duration

The very first mention of music in the text presents us with a logical semantic problem of the type we will continually encounter. Maritain utilises a familiar musical term, *harmony*,<sup>109</sup> but in a sense unfamiliar to the musicologist and non-expert alike. It is essential to grasp the context

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<sup>106</sup> Composers mentioned in the text are Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Liszt, Moussorgsky, Satie, and Stravinsky. Schloesser (2000, p. 176) suggests that Maritain prioritises the moderns at the expense of past masters. The present chapter avoids this polarity, taking Maritain literally, as a philosopher (not a musician) firmly embedded in the spirit of his age.

<sup>107</sup> From *Art and Scholasticism* to his final aesthetic text *The Responsibility of the Artist* (1960), Maritain consistently emphasises the creative experience itself, as a characteristically human action.

<sup>108</sup> This accords with the way Maritain himself frequently dialogued with contemporaneous artists; a process which infused his aesthetics compellingly. *Art and Faith* (1948), for instance, was co-authored by Jean Cocteau.

<sup>109</sup> Most usually connoting a pleasant concord between simultaneously sounding pitches.

in which the word arises; and this can be summarised as *the necessary condition for the creation of a good work of art*. Music is listed between logic and architecture<sup>110</sup> in order to exemplify specific and ideal attributes of that condition (for logic, we have ‘syllogism’; for architecture, ‘equilibrium of masses’). For music, the term given is ‘harmony,’ and we encounter the phrase ‘harmony upon the musician’ (Maritain, 1930, p. 12), or ‘harmony in the musician’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 12).<sup>111</sup> The phrase is used to express a state of intimate conformity and inner proportion between the composer’s soul and the work to be made. This congruence is a manifestation of the scholastic principle of connaturality or congeniality, grafted onto the musical sense. From the beginning, a stable, permanent disposition in the composer—the natural *habitus*—is foremost in determining the meaning of the work to be made, and in this deeply ontological way the composer almost *is* the musical work before the work acquires temporal existence. The musician must be conformed to the work before being able to form ‘because of the virtue of art present in them’ (Maritain 1962, p. 12). Harmony, in this respect, is defined *as* connaturality; and the notion of connaturality, here, is interpreted through the art of music.

The *habitus* or virtue of art which resides in the artist (the composer) is the real premise upon which *Art and Scholasticism* rests (Shadle, 2010, p. 85), for music too is a virtue of the practical intellect in the domain of making. To make this rather dense preliminary framework more conceptualisable, let us consider the following statements by Maritain and Stravinsky.

Operative *habitus*, which attests the activity of the spirit, resides principally in an immaterial faculty, in the intelligence or the will. When, for example, the intellect, at first indifferent to knowing this rather than that, demonstrates a truth to itself, it disposes its own activity in a certain manner, thus giving birth within itself to a quality which proportions it to, and makes it commensurate with, such or such an object of speculation, a quality which elevates it and fixes it as regards this object; ... *Habitus* are intrinsic superelevations of living spontaneity, vital developments which render the soul better in a given order and which fill it with an active sap: (Maritain, 1962, p. 11).

All creation presupposes at its origin a sort of appetite that is brought on by the foretaste of discovery. This foretaste of the creative act accompanies the intuitive grasp of an unknown entity already possessed but not yet intelligible, an entity that will not take definite shape except by the action of a constantly vigilant technique. This appetite that is aroused in me at the mere thought of putting in order musical elements that have attracted my attention is not at all a fortuitous thing like inspiration, but as habitual and periodic, if not as constant, as a natural need (Stravinsky 1947, p. 52).

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<sup>110</sup> The classical inference here is a striking and surely intentional statement of Maritain’s ‘idea’ of music.

<sup>111</sup> ‘Musician’ denotes the composer—the maker of the work. Harter (2000, p. 213) emphasises that ‘the musician in the proper sense of the term is the composer, not those who subsequently perform the work.’



Stravinsky is preoccupied with the very genesis of his work. Thus when he speaks previously of ‘the breath of the speculative spirit’ blowing through ‘a field where everything is balance and calculation’ (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 51), the condition is one of harmony. Maritain writes theoretically and Stravinsky talks from experience, but the fundamental matter is the same. Harmony is thus defined and infused with rich, scholastic connotations: *habitus* and virtue; *connaturalité*—the disposition of the artist and the work to be made.<sup>112</sup> Most importantly, it is the state of perfect consonance expressed through and between these constituents. We may speculate that under these ideal conditions and disposition, the composer has consequently made possible an apprehension of beauty in respect of the end of the work, precisely because the state of harmony, cited by Maritain in its formal musical sense, engenders a sensible radiance in and of itself. ‘[T]here is the intelligible clarity of an arabesque, of a rhythm or a harmonious balance ...’ (Maritain 1962, p. 29). But we will return to beauty soon.

Within our current terms of reference though—music designated as an intellectual virtue—Maritain begins to describe the essential character of music, deriving his definitions from its ancient taxonomy as a liberal art (together with arithmetic and logic). ‘The musician’ he writes, ‘intellectually arranges the sounds in his soul,’ the formulation or expression of which is an unsolidified ‘succession of resonant matter’ communicating the work ‘thus achieved within the mind’ (Maritain, 1923, p. 30).<sup>113</sup> There are two points to highlight here: the first, underscoring the role of intellection or understanding in the process. Stravinsky’s observation that ‘it is impossible to observe the inner workings of this process from the outside’ (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 49) elevates the epistemological rank of the musician. Composers ‘know’ intuitively, which, as Stravinsky states, should not be confused with what is mistakenly termed ‘inspiration’ (a subsidiary phase in the process).

The second point concerning the character of music relates to its fundamentally dynamic and progressive nature; even in its inchoate pre-sonorous existence in the composer’s ‘soul.’ Here it is useful to draw Maritain’s close contemporary and fellow Thomist, Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) into the discussion, somewhat as an interpreter. A knowledgeable and enthusiastic music lover, steeped in his subject matter and author of three texts in the philosophy of art,<sup>114</sup> Gilson’s

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<sup>112</sup> It is vital to stress at this stage that Maritain is not dealing with the arranged, audible, sounds of music.

<sup>113</sup> The word ‘mind’ is used in the earliest translation, and ‘spirit’ in the 1930 and 1962 translations.

<sup>114</sup> As with Maritain, Gilson’s musical aesthetics is formulated and expressed as a component of his overall philosophy of art across three principle texts: *Painting and Reality* (1959), *The Arts of the Beautiful* (1965) and *Forms and Substances in the Arts* (1966), together, with the much earlier treatise *Art et Métaphysique* (1916). Examination of these texts would require a separate study beyond the scope of the present thesis.

musical aesthetic bears fruitful comparison with Maritain's, despite being oriented towards reception not creation, and being mostly formulated well after the majority of Maritain's aesthetic works. Linking the intellectual apprehension of music with its ephemeral, unsolidified progression through time, Gilson states 'The fluid and successive being of musical substance entails its intellectuality since the work, inasmuch as it forms a whole, requires that it be structured in the memory by the mind' (Gilson, 1966, cited in Nelson, 2000, p. 167). The words 'being' and 'substance'—so vital to the scholastic mode of thought—are purposely invoked. We are now in a position to designate and interpret another very familiar musical element also present at the beginning of a work's creation: that of *duration*.<sup>115</sup> For duration might be summarised thus: the composer (in an intellectual action) intuitively has an awareness of the reality of the work to be made; they mindfully order the sounds of the work, producing a corresponding flow of 'resonant matter' which, in return, makes evident to them the essence of their invention. Stravinsky's self-ascription as an 'inventor of music' (Stravinsky 1947, p. 53) and Gilson's emphasis on 'the musically ordered structure of reality' (Murphy, 2004, p. 26) allude to precisely the same thing.<sup>116</sup>

Thus, the introductory thrust of *Art and Scholasticism*—the subject of 'Art as an Intellectual Virtue' is given a small but significant musical analogue in the text. Maritain does not yet see in music the finest correspondence to grasping a sense of the real itself. This will be implied in later work,<sup>117</sup> but for now we have the start of an ontological account, in which harmony is pure harmony—that is, belongs to the composer by nature. Sensory observation of things colludes with the composer's intellect (which is already in a harmonious relationship with itself, due to the nurture of the *habitus*) and ideally the situation is one of harmony in the production of a work. We may conjecture the extent to which composers through history have understood how the physical sounds of a well-ordered chord embody something of the 'pure harmony' described in this context.

Duration is pure duration—that is, existence 'found to be the structuring impetus of time ... the bottom of reality, and propelling it forward ... a continuous and unitary flow of motion'

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<sup>115</sup> Most usually connotes the length, in time, of musical notes, sections, or entire works; but also the element which most clearly distinguishes music as an occurrent art that is manifested through time. In *The Poetics*, Stravinsky terms music a *chronologic* art (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 28).

<sup>116</sup> Unlike his specific usage of the term *harmony*, Maritain does not employ the word 'duration' as such, but the familiar notion that music achieves its formulation and communicability solely in the temporal sense is quite implicit.

<sup>117</sup> Murphy (2004) suggests that Gilson does not shy away from using music as the finest analogue to apprehending an intuition of reality.

(Murphy, 2004, p. 26). Can we also propose that the composer is described as the one, who in the prime instance, demonstrates and embodies ‘the musically ordered structure of reality’?<sup>118</sup> Such a definition is generous enough to be as applicable in the context of the mediaeval ‘artisan’ or to the modern. Maritain never defines the composer thus, but Gilson almost does, and Stravinsky as good as says it.<sup>119</sup> About duration, he writes: ‘Musical creation appears to him an innate complex of intuitions and possibilities based primarily upon an exclusively musical experiencing of time, *chronos*, of which the musical work merely gives us the functional realization’ (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 29).

### III – The rules of art: tradition and technique

Musical references are scattered throughout the subsequent major portion of the text. They continue to be demarcated within scholastic terms of reference, and beauty is never far beneath the surface—it runs like a vein through the chapters titled ‘The Rules of Art’ and ‘The Purity of Art.’ Also present are Maritain’s first references to specific composers, the technique of composition, the expressive character of the work, and many instances in which the philosophical sense elides from or to a transcendental-theological exposition of the creative process. For thematic continuity though, ‘The Rules of Art’ must be assessed as a next-stage commentary on the role and work of the artist. Here, Maritain deepens our understanding of the scholastic notion of the *habitus*, stressing that a living rule must be formed to undergird those ‘rules’ which are the essence of art.<sup>120</sup>

According to their [the ancients] principles, rules are of the essence of art, but on condition that the *habitus*, a living rule, be formed; without it, rules are nothing ... The fact remains that art, being an intellectual *habitus*, presupposes necessarily and always a *formation* of the mind, which puts the artist in possession of fixed rules of operation (Maritain, 1962, pp. 40, 42).

In a somewhat unlikely example, Mussorgsky is given, alongside the painter Giotto, as typifying an artist who, by sheer effort alone, was able to embody a working rule of the sort described above. It is far from clear what Maritain means or why he chooses this composer as a paradigm; and obviously sensing the need for clarification, his footnote partially comes to

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<sup>118</sup> This is neither to diminish nor undermine the performer’s or listener’s apprehension of the ‘musically ordered structure of reality.’ Nor is it a matter of hierarchy, for music’s supra-rational modes of operation apply to all participants: but rather, in the ontology of musical creation there is a straightforward trajectory that begins with the composer.

<sup>119</sup> In the second chapter of *The Poetics*, in which he interprets the fundamental musical elements.

<sup>120</sup> Maritain is at pains to differentiate between the rules formed from the *habitus* and the modern notion of methods and techniques, ‘recipes and clever devices—or again if it is theoretical and speculative instead of being operative’ (Maritain, 1962, pp. 40, 41).

our aid. It describes the secluded conditions under which Giotto's natural gift and sense of artistic form was experimentally shaped in isolation, thus nurturing the *habitus*. In this manner the artist approaches 'the spiritual edge of art,' demonstrating through 'the effort of invention,' a 'synthetic intuition ... demanding solitude' which is grasped through experience—*via inventionis* (Maritain, 1963, p. 63).<sup>121</sup> With Mussorgsky though, the same creative isolation can hardly be said to apply, although the element of self-tuition holds true. Stravinsky (1947, pp. 95, 96) points out that Mussorgsky, together with the remainder of 'The Five'<sup>122</sup> began as talented amateurs who sought to implant a fresh 'paysan' sensibility into art music. Maritain could mean nothing more than this; but Stravinsky also highlights their unschooled technique. Was Maritain likewise alluding to Mussorgsky's less-than-formal and sporadic composition training?<sup>123</sup> A footnote unique to the last edition would seem to confirm this.

In contradistinction to the case of Giotto or Moussorgsky, the case of Mozart provides us with the classic example of how fruitful can be the union of natural gift (and what a gift!) and education -- the earliest, most perfect and most intense rational cultivation of the *habitus* (Maritain, 1962, p. 179).

Maritain is no music critic. As an untrained listener he is simply stating here, as elsewhere, what he hears to be the case pertaining to certain composers.<sup>124</sup> And surrounding the work of Mozart—a composer whose technique was cultivated from within (natural gift) and without (education)—there is surely almost universal agreement. Maritain's appraisal is both accurate and useful. For his part, Stravinsky endorses a scholastic-inspired account of the musical formation of the mind in the genesis of a work,<sup>125</sup> neatly summarising the *habitus*: 'Habit is by

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<sup>121</sup> Later in *Art and Scholasticism* (see *The Purity of Art*, Maritain 1930, pp. 63, 64) Maritain returns to the question of how an artist imitates nature, stressing that 'it is not to copy nature, but to *base himself* upon nature' that the artist could be said to enter the *via inventionis*. This has theological implications, for as Maritain states: 'The Artist, whether he knows it or not, is consulting God when he looks at things' (Maritain, 1930, p. 64). Gilson rejects the idea that music imitates nature, but his objection is a more straightforward aversion to overt referentialism in music, and here Maritain would certainly concur.

<sup>122</sup> Mussorgsky, together with Balakirev, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov and Cui (collectively termed 'The Five') were said to represent a new Russian classicism, although Stravinsky in *The Poetics* downplays the nationalistic narrative, focussing as much on the matter of their compositional skill.

<sup>123</sup> Maritain seems to recognise the paradoxical imbalance in Mussorgsky's artistry; for in *Art and Poetry* (Maritain, 1943, p. 102) he comments, 'There is magic in Schubert, Chopin and Moussorgsky.' Musicology generally acknowledges this 'magic' to lie in the composer's skill at melodic vocal expression, whereas, 'As an absolute musician he was hopelessly limited, with remarkably little ability to construct pure music or even a purely instrumental texture' (Abraham, 1995, p. 872).

<sup>124</sup> As an expert practitioner, Stravinsky concurs, writing 'Art in the true sense is a way of fashioning works according to certain methods acquired either by apprenticeship or by inventiveness' (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 24).

<sup>125</sup> In *The Poetics* (Stravinsky, 1947), there is no clearer endorsement of a scholastic definition of musical creation than in Chapter 3, 'The Composition of Music,' and no attempt to conceal its spiritual axis. Penicka (2005), Shadle (2010) and Schloesser (2000) explicitly identify Stravinsky as the ideal Maritainian 'artifex'—a term denoting a skilled and expert maker in an art.

definition, an unconscious acquisition and tends to become mechanical'<sup>126</sup> (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 56). Such a mode of creative development inevitably places the composer on an artistic trajectory that is unique and peculiar to themselves: termed *via determinate* (Maritain, 1923, p. 64) or '*viae certae et determinate*' (Maritain, 1962, p. 45).

Does this singular peculiarity guarantee a spiritually pure manifestation of 'the rules' of art from one generation of composer to another? In a minor divergence, or difference in emphasis between philosopher and composer, Maritain lists three musical titans to propose that the inevitable rise of technical skill, coupled solely to the exploitation of what has been naturally discovered, risks undermining or exhausting the naturally-derived, living and spiritual rules.

We may believe that from Bach to Beethoven and from Beethoven to Wagner art declined in quality, in spirituality, and in purity. But who would be bold enough to say that one of these three men was less necessary than the other? (Maritain, 1935, p. 45).

This, in itself, is not a judgement of the stature of each composer in light of their immediate predecessor, but a reflection on the general direction in which music historically flows—it is inevitable, almost obligatory. We will see subsequently and especially in respect of melody, that Maritain's position on Wagner's craft will alter radically—quickly identifying him as the musical antithesis, even arch-villain of sound scholastic principles. But already, between the 1923 and 1930 editions of *Art and Scholasticism*, Wagner has been relegated from 'great' to merely 'necessary.'<sup>127</sup> Stravinsky, however, appeals to tradition as 'a living force that animates and informs the present' (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 57) in order to uphold the continuity of authentic compositional virtue. He cites Beethoven and Brahms, in whose work respectively exists idiosyncratic method (which is superseded in each generation), but more crucially, as representing a single tradition which endures and 'appears at every epoch under a different disguise' (Schloesser, 2005, p. 147).

There is no fundamental difference to the view taken by Maritain—'tradition and discipline are the true nurses of originality' (Maritain, 1930, p. 47), and again Stravinsky assists us as we begin to form the basis of a musical hermeneutic founded on Maritain's source text. In a footnote only present from the 1930 edition onwards, Maritain gives a clear hint concerning

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<sup>126</sup> It is contextually clear that by 'mechanical,' Stravinsky means 'spontaneous' or 'done without thought,' and by stressing the excellence of the habit (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 56), that it is a virtue to be desired and cultivated.

<sup>127</sup> Maritain, 1923, p. 69 and Maritain, 1930, p. 47 respectively. Although Bach and Beethoven are included in the revision, it is only Wagner whose 'quality, spirituality and purity' is subsequently the subject of scathing critique. Stravinsky's estimation of Wagner in *The Poetics* and in *An Autobiography* (Stravinsky, 1962) mirrors that of Maritain, but even more forcefully.

the significance of some composers, and why he will appropriate them in future texts. He cites a conversation between Eugène Delacroix and Chopin, wherein the composer stated that Beethoven's lack of unity was because 'he turns his back on eternal principles—Mozart never!' (Maritain, 1962, p. 183). Maritain makes his point by siding with Chopin: but he isn't dismissing Beethoven as redundant. He is further reflecting on the inevitable flow of musical development, the progression of which is no guarantee of advancement in purity of form or tradition.<sup>128</sup>

#### IV – The purity of art: classicism

Having considered the notion of music as an intellectual virtue, which manifests a natural creative rule requiring 'the artist's whole appetitive faculty, his passions and his will' (Maritain, 1930, p. 48),<sup>129</sup> we see the obvious order of the relationship between composer and work. 'The "possibility" of the work's existence is only measured by the "existence of the artist," as its first cause' (Murphy, 2004, p. 218). So, turning to the work itself, we ask, what constitutes its essential purity—what makes for 'virtuous' music? From this portion of the text of *Art and Scholasticism*, familiar significant terms such as *classicism* and *imitation* are prominently interpreted, the notion of melody makes a tentative appearance, and Maritain stakes out an account of the musically beautiful.

To be clear, when using the terms 'classical' or 'classic,' the age of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven—the first Viennese School—is not being invoked. Rather, the terms are utilised to specify qualities, characteristics and ideals of (generally) pre-sixteenth-century artisanship,<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> This is consistent with Maritain's frequent assertion that as human faculty in artistic production ascended at the Renaissance, so its spiritual ground of being declined; and that this condition manifests repeatedly in subsequent centuries, at discrete artistic junctures: '[T]he soul takes a steep fall' (Maritain, 1935, p. 52). Both Maritain and Stravinsky (1945, pp. 57-59) urge for renewal in these terms, with the latter listing those composers he considers having achieved renewal, and those which haven't. The 'music-drama' and the notion of a 'synthesis of the arts' are considered to embody the severest spiritual decline.

<sup>129</sup> Stravinsky characterises the composer's obligation as religious piety. 'He seeks a satisfaction that he fully knows he will not find without first striving for it. One cannot force one's self to love; but love presupposes understanding, and in order to understand, one must exert one's self. It is the same problem that was posed in the Middle Ages by the theologians of pure love. To understand in order to love; to love in order to understand: we are here not going around in a vicious circle; we are rising spirally, providing we have made an initial effort, have even just gone through a routine exercise' (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 55).

<sup>130</sup> 'Too many theories have reduced us to a state of exasperation at the mention of the word "classic": it is so hackneyed. Nevertheless definitions of words are free' (Maritain, 1930, p. 189). Maritain answers head-on the logical semantic issue addressed at the outset of this chapter—familiar terms needing to be invested with unfamiliar (or older) meanings. What is at stake is the authenticity of the term and that which it describes. Accordingly, the term 'Neoclassical' as commonly applied to some composers and works at the start of the twentieth century is a misnomer and was never implied by Maritain. Using the term 'neo-classicism'

in order to suggest examples which epitomise the return to an essentially Aristotelian aesthetic: most prominently that the artist embodies ‘a sort of lived participation in logic’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 51).<sup>131</sup> As a practitioner, Stravinsky recognises this kind of involvement as the ordered working of a mind in the discovery of music—classifying it as a significant benefit from art in general, and one that is distinct from and additional to the sense of logical wholeness that may be felt in an aesthetic experience (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 24).<sup>132</sup>

The relationship of logic, termed by Maritain ‘the liberal art *par excellence*’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 49), to truth and beauty is demarcated quite straightforwardly: this is to say, falsehood or the ugly, affectation, deception or insincerity are described as such because they express a failure of logic and a flaw in the conception or rendering of the work. What then constitutes or guarantees the purity and truthfulness of art? The answer is also surprisingly straightforward. ‘Logical coherence’ ... ‘simplicity and purity of means’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 53), sincerity and naturalness—traits which are signified in the terms *classical* or *classic*.<sup>133</sup> An important question arises from the phrase ‘simplicity and purity of means’—words which in the musical context strongly evoke the element of *melody*, and in the liturgical context, of plainchant. These must surely be fundamental to a discussion of what constitutes a pure musical work, yet in *Art and Scholasticism*, the role of melody is only hazily inferred. Given Maritain’s partiality for the tenets of mediaeval artistry, we may have encountered something of a lacuna.

But abruptly into the discussion enters another composer: Erik Satie (1866-1925), who is given as the musical personification of all good things classical.

These days, all *the best people* want the classical. I know nothing in contemporary production more sincerely *classical* than the music of Satie. “Never any sorcery, repetitions, suspicious caresses, fevers, or miasmas. Never does Satie ‘stir the pool.’ It is the poetry of childhood relived by a master technician” (Maritain, 1962, p. 53)

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pejoratively in *Art and Faith* (Maritain, 1948, p. 106), Maritain implies inauthenticity and impurity; appearing to mean that one is either ‘classical’ or one isn’t.

<sup>131</sup> There are subtle differences in the three translations; the 1930 edition stating that ‘in every art there is as it were a vivid experience of logic,’ whilst the earlier 1923 edition describes art as possessing ‘a fellowship with logic,’ and it is the earliest text which most clearly expresses a type-analogy between the classic liberal arts.

<sup>132</sup> Whereas Stravinsky clearly distinguishes composer from listener, aesthetician S.K. Langer’s (1957) thesis joins the artist’s ‘lived participation in logic’ to the recipient’s aesthetic awareness of ‘logical wholeness,’ proposing a unitary embodiment of the work’s logical form, derived from, and expressing the formal structures of human experience.

<sup>133</sup> In extensive notes (Maritain, 1962, pp. 185,186), the author gives an account of the aesthetic virtues at work in mediaeval architecture.

Maritain's lavish endorsement of Satie as a composer whom Aristotle would have liked (Maritain, 1935, p. 17) is consistent across all editions of *Art and Scholasticism*, with Satie's death occurring just after the 1923 edition.<sup>134</sup> Schloesser (2000, 2005) and Shadle (2010) detect a none-too-subtle nationalist, political rhetoric beneath the text and they point to Jean Cocteau as a hugely influential voice in the forming of that rhetoric. This is true enough, as is the degree of naivety in Maritain's approval of Satie; but we risk losing sight of the philosophical and musical import of the text. In a brief footnote in the two later editions, Satie's music is variously described by Maritain as 'bashfulness itself, showing the utmost concern for austerity and purity' (Maritain, 1930, p. 16), and 'achievements in modesty, evidencing the most profound care for rigor and purity' (Maritain, 1962, p. 17). It is evident that the groundwork is being laid for an aesthetic standard that vehemently rejects the very methods and modes of much nineteenth-century romantic music; moreover, that the referential 'trickeries' of certain, as yet un-named composers, are being described as antithetical to the tenets of classicism. Conversely, Satie's 'poetry of childhood' evokes simplicity, discovery and spontaneity.<sup>135</sup>

This may be a partial answer to our question concerning melody. Satie's notable economy and clarity of expression is seized upon by Maritain, arguably because these qualities are overtly exhibited in the melodic element of the music. In later texts he deals with melody explicitly, affording it weighty epistemological status and a transcendental role in the creation of a work (Fallon, 2002, p. 288). But for now, *Art and Scholasticism* lays down a stringently objective foundation which, as we have seen, has musical associations in the elements of *harmony* and *duration*—added to which, in *Creative Intuition*, is *counterpoint* (Maritain, 1953, p. 252, 1955, p. 63). These elements are viewed as entirely objective.<sup>136</sup>

Likewise, plainchant, in later works, is revealed to be an important and personal musical touchstone for Maritain, but in *Art and Scholasticism* it is only briefly addressed. Whilst Gregorian melody (alongside Bach) is offered as a musical standard of classical purity, we must not overlook the liturgical separation of plainchant from the realm of art. It is, in Catholic

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<sup>134</sup> It is likely that Maritain was present at Satie's death, accompanied by a priest who simultaneously received the composer into the Catholic Church and administered the last rites.

<sup>135</sup> Schloesser (2005, p. 190) describes Cocteau's appraisal of Satie's solo piano *Gymnopédies* in which the playwright contrasts them to Debussy's orchestrations of the same works. Cocteau writes from manifestly having studied and heard the works, whereas it is less certain in the case of Maritain.

<sup>136</sup> In his 1924 article 'Some Ideas About my Octuor,' (see White, 1966, pp. 528-529), Stravinsky extends an 'objective' approach to the actual choice of instruments for the work. Stating, 'my Octuor is not an 'emotive' work but a musical composition based on objective elements which are sufficient in themselves,' he preferred wind instruments over strings—the strings being suited to the kind of 'emotive' music he was repudiating.



tradition, divine music of a different order (Maritain, 1943, p. 103; 1935, p. 56). We are reminded that *Art and Scholasticism* is a philosophy of art—or more correctly, a philosophy of creating artworks. But we will return to Gregorian melody and Bach soon.

## V – The purity of art: imitation

Entering into the notion of classicism's foundation in logical coherence is Maritain's account of *imitation* and its relationship to beauty. The term is ubiquitous in the philosophy and history of art, and has clear-cut musical implications in terms of composing technique<sup>137</sup> and more broadly within the context of understanding music as an imitative art.<sup>138</sup> But how is the concept of imitation framed? First, by agreeing with Aristotle (Maritain, 1935, p. 54) that to imitate is a normal, basic—even primitive—human act. But now, this definition cannot be restricted to 'its vulgar meaning of *exact reproduction or representation of a given reality*' (Maritain, 1923, p. 82)—art pushes the concept far beyond this, and by virtue of its non-representative, abstractive character, so must music definitively. Gilson concurs, maintaining that art's vital role is not to imitate nature (Nelson, 2000, p. 164), and throughout *The Poetics*, Stravinsky is unremittingly scathing of every referential technique of the romantics.

McLaughlin (1982) contrasts Gilson's and Maritain's view of imitation. In casting abstraction as the ultimate freedom from representation, Gilson maintains that overt representation existing in the works of previous ages is only incidental, and that the real import of a work lies elsewhere. Maritain, though, points to the contradiction which must be faced by non-representative art: it seeks to convey only essence, yes, but essence of what? Things exist and the perception of things is a basic human predisposition and the stuff of art. Creation begins with observation and the basing of oneself upon nature.<sup>139</sup> 'For the artist who does not first allow things delivered to his consciousness through sensation to become part of himself will be empty of anything to say.' (Maritain, 1953, cited in McLaughlin, 1982, p. 305). This more

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<sup>137</sup> Most frequently defined as the repetition of a particular musical motif or phrase, involving a greater or lesser degree of alteration/variation, but where the essential and recognisable character of the music is preserved. Imitation is commonly construed as an entirely technical compositional device or technique.

<sup>138</sup> Accounts of imitation as mimesis have a long trajectory in musical aesthetics. It is classed as 'imitation of' or 'expressive of' (Paddison, 2010), however, post-enlightenment thought rejects any metaphysical basis.

<sup>139</sup> It is fitting to capture Stravinsky's reflections on the creative process in Maritain's phrase: 'the artist, whether he knows it or not, consults God in looking at things' (Maritain, 1962, p. 61). At many points in *The Poetics*, especially in Chapter 3, Stravinsky's thesis rests on this theological premise. By contrast, a 'hyper-realist account of art, which conceives art as the mirror of physical nature, simply suppresses the spiritual nature of the act of artistic creation and the spiritual nature of the idea made manifest through an artwork's material signs. The artisan in this account would be reduced to an illusionist' (Conley, 2012, p.242).

logical conclusion helps us to understand how Maritain interprets the Aristotelian notion of imitation—one clearly shared by Stravinsky (two pages after a direct reference to Maritain).

The faculty of creating is never given to us all by itself. It always goes hand in hand with the gift of observation. And the true creator may be recognized by his ability always to find about him, in the commonest and humblest thing, items worthy of note (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 54).

Maritain's text is painstaking—now almost impenetrably dense, and we are not aided by his use of the single word, 'sign,' to connote at least two constituents of the imitative act.<sup>140</sup> He expands the concept of imitation, firstly within the bounds of aesthetic delight [joy],<sup>141</sup> which, he reminds us, occurs when the object of delight, sensorially given to the intellect, is well proportioned for the intellect [mind].<sup>142</sup> Art though, as ordered to beauty,<sup>143</sup> does not end at sensible forms, colours and sounds, although grasping these signs is a necessary first stage. Rather, it makes known spontaneously and intuitively a realm of signification beyond those sensible things (signs in themselves). Furthermore, that which is signified [symbolised] may also be a sign [symbol], thus it follows that the greater the degree of signification, the greater the potential for delight. Paraphrasing Maritain, we should therefore conclude that the beauty of a work of music 'is thus incomparably richer than the beauty of a carpet' (Maritain, 1930, p. 57)—its worth 'is directly proportional to the value of the creative insight from which it springs and which it expresses' (McLaughlin, 1982, p. 306).

Imitation in music thus far demarcated. It effects the beauty of the work and procures the delight of the soul, precisely by rendering through sounds (rhythms, melodies) something more than the initial perception of these sensible aural signs. It procures 'the "characters," as Aristotle says, and the movements of the soul, the invisible world which stirs within us' (Maritain, 1962, p. 55). Imitation is not materially understood, neither does it constitute technical dexterity, for to limit the concept thus, even perfectly executed, is no more than 'servile' imitation—the end of which is neither beauty nor delight. At many points, Stravinsky is in agreement, and once

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<sup>140</sup> The 1930 Scanlan translation uses the word 'symbol' in every instance, which at times, is clearer. A combination of *sign* and *symbol*, in translation, would render this section of the text more transparently.

<sup>141</sup> Square brackets denote the word used in the Scanlan translation.

<sup>142</sup> Maritain makes the logical point that the greatest potential for delight, or increasing degrees of delight, is commensurate with the degree to which knowledge resides or has been developed in the individual.

<sup>143</sup> It is crucial to remember that Maritain's entire thesis in *Art and Scholasticism* rests on his privileging and defining *fine art*: that is, art which is ordered to and made for the apprehension of beauty and no other purpose. Haynes (2015) gives a clear summary of Maritain's aesthetic criteria, which, far from being restrictive, provides a standard against which critical judgement and the classification of a multiplicity of forms may be developed, including conceptual, abstract and avant-garde art.

more, Gilson corroborates,<sup>144</sup> perhaps more succinctly: ‘Musical sounds are not utilisations of physical elements, elaborated and ordered to aesthetic ends, but realities whose origin and essence is exclusively aesthetic.’ With no meaning outside of the sphere of art, these elements, objects or signs also ‘permit the musician to elaborate works’ which are ‘totally expressive of beauty’ (Gilson, 1916, cited in Murphy, 2004, p. 71). As with *harmony* and *duration*, the concept of *imitation* is invested with an ontological loftiness which does not undermine its more familiar musicological connotations, but which deepens our understanding of their cause.<sup>145</sup>

As regards our composer, the rhythms and melodies, taken together with what is signified by those elements, are still just ‘proximate ... remote matter’ (Maritain, 1935, p. 56), and they are the tools of the composer. They know how to use the sensible elements, to work them, because of the virtue of art residing within them. Again, a footnote only present in the later edition clarifies matters. ‘The very things evoked, the feelings, ideas and representations, are for the artist but materials and means, signs still (Maritain, 1935, p. 56). Crucially, we have still not yet arrived at the fullness of meaning intended in Maritain’s definition of *imitation*—a meaning yet more transcendental and metaphysical.

What is required is not that the representation exactly conforms to a given reality, but that through the material elements of the beauty of the work there truly pass, sovereign and whole, the radiance of a form—of a form, and therefore of *a truth*: in this sense the great phrase of the Platonists, *splendor veri*, always remains (Maritain, 1962, p. 57).

Now we have a more precise interpretation, wherein the delight (joy) experienced in a beautiful work arises directly from the perfect manifestation of form—the truth of imitation as an appearance of form. More succinctly, imitation is ‘the expression ... in a work suitably proportioned, of some secret principle of intelligibility shining forth’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 59, 60). The earliest translation<sup>146</sup> renders it more majestically. ‘Behold the formula of imitation in art:—expression or manifestation, in a harmoniously proportioned work’ (Maritain, 1923, pp.

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<sup>144</sup> Gilson’s earliest aesthetic text, *Art et Metaphysique* (1916) predates Maritain’s *Art et Philosophe* (1920), the first iteration of *Art and Scholasticism*.

<sup>145</sup> Gilson’s conception of imitation in music is severely limited. He admits that ‘music succeeds only in imitating itself’ (Nelson, 2000, p. 168) which is nonetheless reminiscent of Stravinsky’s apocryphal ‘music expresses itself,’ and aligns with the notion of aesthetic exclusivity—music is the highest abstract art. Accordingly, For Gilson, musical sounds have no signifying function, whereas for Maritain, they transcend signifying function, or more accurately, that signs [symbols] are the initial material basis for the imitation and rendering of higher forms.

<sup>146</sup> The 1923 ‘Ditchling’ translation by John O’Connor is considered imperfect in respect of recent scholarship, but nonetheless remains a historically important archival source.

86, 87).<sup>147</sup> Only music is cited in support of this pivotal definition, and Maritain contrasts what he terms the ‘truly classical’—the apotheosis of the principles of imitation—with music that desensitises or debauches ‘the eye, ear or the spirit [mind]’ (Maritain, 1935, p. 57). For the former, he proffers Gregorian chant and Bach: for the latter, Wagner and Stravinsky.

## VI – Maritain’s volte-face

We must briefly detour to account for this startling judgement, which apparently renders the present author’s reliance on Stravinsky’s *Poetics* as a conversation partner very unsound. In reality however, ‘the eye, ear or the spirit’ when read alongside the fulsome retraction<sup>148</sup> added in footnotes to the French text of 1927, manifestly infers the *Sacre du Printemps*, which scandalised Paris in 1913 as much visually, if not more than, aurally. To the musically innocent Maritain, the work may indeed have been shocking, as might Diaghilev’s ballet to Catholic piety and conscience, but it was a judgement quickly revised in retrospect.<sup>149</sup>

Simultaneously, Wagner is now named for the first time, as representing the musical antithesis of the transcendentals themselves (which renders Maritain’s endorsement of Satie’s music more complete); and it is Wagner who remains implicitly so across future texts, whilst Stravinsky (Penicka, 2005)<sup>150</sup> alongside Arthur Lourié (Emerson, 2015, pp. 196-268), will become the exemplary ‘artifex’—a Maritainian artist par-excellence. This may be a defining moment in *Art and Scholasticism*: one in which the shape and direction of the whole of Maritain’s future aesthetics—a theory of art based on the concepts of Aquinas—pivots on this tiny, easily-overlooked musical reference embedded within a complex account of some of the qualities of

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<sup>147</sup> In a previous footnote to the chapter *Art and Beauty*, Maritain cites Aquinas to explain that a musical work procuring the sort of delight thus defined is possible because the sense of hearing itself ‘is a kind of reason, as is every cognitive power’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 162), thus recognising and resonating with its own characteristics.

<sup>148</sup> Maritain’s retraction suggests approvingly that even *The Rite of Spring* was conforming to the clarity of the ‘sincerely classical.’ ‘I am sorry to have spoken in this way of Stravinsky. I knew as yet only the *Sacre du Printemps*, but I should have already seen that Stravinsky was turning his back on all that shocks us in Wagner. Since then he has shown that genius preserves and increases its strength by renewing it in the light. Exuberant with truth, his admirably disciplined work affords the best lesson of any today in grandeur and creative force, and best comes up to the classical rigor of which we are speaking. His purity, his authenticity, his glorious spiritual vigor, are to the gigantism of Parsifal and the Tetralogy as a miracle of Moses is to the enchantments of the Egyptians’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 57).

<sup>149</sup> See comments in Penicka, (2005, p. 9) and Schloesser, (2000, p. 185).

<sup>150</sup> The influences of Stravinsky and Lourié are all-pervasive, especially in Maritain’s approach to melody. It must be noted, however, that the relationship between Stravinsky and Maritain remained more oblique, whilst that which developed between Maritain and Lourié overtly influenced the later texts *Art and Poetry* (1943) and *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (1953).

beauty. But as we have discovered, *harmony*, *duration* and *classicism*, have already been given a very subtle musical exegesis.

Returning to the chapter *The Purity of Art*, it seems no coincidence that immediately subsequent to the words ‘Gregorian melody’ and ‘the music of Bach,’ comes the sentence ‘In the presence of a beautiful work ... the intellect rejoices without discourse’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 57). Maritain confronts beauty in music directly, and in so doing, the reader is moved towards an understanding of imitation which has a familiar ring to it, especially in the domain of musical aesthetics—that of *ineffability*.

The juxtaposition of Gregorian chant with the music of Bach, however, still seems problematic given Maritain’s insistent emphasis on the works and creative principles of fine art. One considers the historic chant of the Church not to be ‘art’ as so defined; whereas Bach’s works manifestly are. Logically, this emphasis on the work made stresses that it is the work itself which intelligibly radiates a form, manifesting beauty and procuring delight. Again, this is easily conceivable in Bach (a canon of numbered works) but less applicable to chant—the concept of which is a divinely inspired, universal and enduring musical language, and the function of which is to render the liturgy in musical sound.<sup>151</sup> In chant, there is no canon of works, or description of the making of works, neither is the notion of signification particularly apposite.<sup>152</sup> Here is the paradox of an art/liturgy binary—one heightened by clear evidence that in terms of making or crafting a work, this binary did not exist in the everyday practical sphere, either in the mediaeval artisan (in whom every element extraneous to the theological intention of the work is subordinated) or in later ages.

Plantinga (2011) concludes that the notion of separating theological import and compositional technique results from adopting two extreme postures; one emphasising Bach as a ‘pure musician,’ the other viewing him mainly as a ‘Christian theologian,’ moreover that such a debate would have perplexed Bach himself. Artists create, whether for Church or another patron, and the same operative principles of their craft work in both milieu. Nowhere more than in the work of Bach,<sup>153</sup> ‘the greatest of musicians’ (Maritain, 1943, p. 101), is this manifestly

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<sup>151</sup> Maritain (1943, p. 103) attributes to Gregorian melody a transcendent ‘sacred magic ... which has its source in the unutterable desires of the Holy Ghost.’ Following the sense of this, melody automatically acquires pre-eminence, and plainchant is the spiritual ‘Father’ of all art music (works that are ordered to beauty)..

<sup>152</sup> The signifying aspect to plainchant is of an iconic nature—it is to the ear what the icon is to the eye, and by the same token, the priest who celebrates the liturgy is not a creative artist because the Catholic liturgy is taken as a received reality, as an icon expresses a received reality.

<sup>153</sup> There is no intention to dispute that the Lutheran Church or the court of Cöthen (for instance) engendered distinct creative responses from Bach. However ‘[T]he complexity of Bach’s harmonic thought converges with

visible and elevated to unparalleled heights (Gardiner, 2013, pp. 208-225). But Maritain is very specific—‘Gregorian melody’—not just a vague reference to liturgical or religious music. As ever, his approach is ontological, and a key to reconciling the apparently incongruent pairing of Gregorian melody and Bach lies in the continuation of the text.

If therefore art manifests or expresses *in matter* a certain radiance of being, a certain form, a certain soul, a certain truth ... it does not give a conceptual and discursive expression of it in the soul. It is thus that it suggests without properly making known, and it expresses that which our ideas cannot signify. *A, a, a*, exclaims Jeremias,<sup>154</sup> *Dominus Deus, ecce nescio loqui*. But where speech leaves off, song begins—*exsultatio mentis prorumpens in vocem* (Maritain, 1962, p. 58).<sup>155</sup>

Gilson affirms that music—over and above all other arts—exhibits a higher, more spiritual liberation from the material world (Nelson, 2000, p. 166): in essence its characteristic ineffability. Thus, the reality of music’s aesthetic exclusivity (Murphy, 2004, p. 71) makes the connection between liturgical and pure art music seem already less tenuous.<sup>156</sup> It is in the footnotes though, where Maritain clarifies that art ‘furnishes us with a substitute for direct intellectual knowledge of the singular, which is the privilege of the angelic mind’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 192).<sup>157</sup> This is the crux—‘a substitute,’ meaning the one is not the other—Bach is not Gregorian melody. On this, Gilson agrees, maintaining that music in the direct service of religion is subordinated to an end other than the ‘rule of beauty’ (Nelson, 2000, p. 169). But in Maritain’s more nuanced version, chant is an altogether angelic archetype which nonetheless, by virtue of a sensorially-grasped (not verbal or conceptual) material work, is emulated and even imitated in human artistic creation and in art music.<sup>158</sup> In respect of this, the music of Bach, ‘this most sublime of music, this mother-music’ (Maritain, 1943, p. 103), is afforded pre-eminence and is ontologically connected to plainchant. It is the operative invention of ‘a real

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that of the theological ideas’ (Gardiner, 2013, p. 219) all the more compellingly across the sacred and secular contexts, if understood in the scholastic sense which Maritain implies. Marissen (1995) offers an interesting and effective counter to the art-liturgy binary in his religious interpretation of the Six Brandenburg Concerti.

<sup>154</sup> Jeremiah, 1, 6. Only the Vulgate makes sense of Maritain’s usage of the verse.

<sup>155</sup> S.K. Langer draws a striking parallel as she discusses the semantics of ineffability: ‘Where Carnap speaks of “cries like oh, oh,” or, on a higher level, lyrical verses, I can see only a complete failure to apprehend a fundamental distinction. Why should we cry our feelings at such high levels that anyone would think we were *talking*? Clearly, poetry means more than a cry; it has reason for being articulate; and metaphysics is more than a croon with which we might cuddle up to the world in a comfortable attitude. We are dealing with symbolisms here, and what they express is often highly intellectual’ (Langer, 1942, pp. 86-87). Langer never offers more than an albeit brilliantly nuanced account of human symbolic cognitive activity.

<sup>156</sup> Already discussed in respect of *duration*.

<sup>157</sup> By implication music, due to the precise placement of the footnotes between passages concerning music.

<sup>158</sup> This is succinctly affirmed in Maritain’s description of human artistic creation as a continuation, and the artist as ‘an associate of God in the making of works of beauty’ (Maritain, 1930, p. 63).

human intelligence ... not some detached Godlike figure who just creates *ex nihilo*’ (Gardiner, 2013, p. 215).

There is no hint that Maritain’s thought is shaped by the historical influence of the Bach revival<sup>159</sup> and we must reiterate that he is not a musicologist or musician, but a philosopher. As Brown (2011, p. 248) also points out, the rediscovery of Bach’s music was mostly due to ‘the very romantic movement with which he is so often contrasted,’ and a movement to which Maritain seems particularly allergic. Rather, Bach appears in *Art and Scholasticism* solely in accordance with the text’s focus on the principles of creation in a work. He is given as *the* composer who represents a supremely objective music and the highest purity of form. One who exhibited ‘great natural gifts and thorough training’ and one whose invention was learnt by observation (Gardiner, 2013, pp. 208-209) and through development of the *habitus*; the one ‘whose major concerns revolved around harmony’ (p. 215), even ‘the progenitor of harmony’ (p. 225). In sum, Bach exemplifies the harmony that exists within the musician.<sup>160</sup>

A further motive for the pairing of Gregorian chant with the music of Bach, and encapsulating the two with texts from Jeremiah and St. Thomas, appears to be to establish the highest possible view of music itself—one that theologically reinforces music’s characteristic ‘explanation-lessness’ or ineffability. This is to say where verbal expression fails, music, specifically melody, begins: a reasonably familiar trope across musical aesthetics.<sup>161</sup> Maritain does not do so, but he might naturally have added a footnote to invoke Augustine’s and Aquinas’s commentaries on applicable Psalms (Bonds, 2014, pp. 44, 45). Bonds also notes Augustine’s implied and Aquinas’s explicit acknowledgement of the *jubilus* of the Alleluia of the Mass.<sup>162</sup> This reminds us of Maritain’s remarks on the intellect rejoicing without discourse in the presence of beauty, and significantly, situating it in the line of development of absolute music. The juxtaposition of Gregorian chant and Bach therefore additionally conveys something of the metaphysical

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<sup>159</sup> The rediscovery of the works of J.S. Bach in the first half of the nineteenth century, most prominently in Germany and England, was particularly stimulated through performances by Mendelssohn.

<sup>160</sup> Plantinga (2011, p. 220) notes this sense of harmonious balance as being a point of debate about viewing Bach as representing a middle ground between ‘pure musician’ and ‘pure theologian.’ In the chapter ‘*Christian Art*’ (Maritain, 1962, pp. 64-69) and subsequently in the later work *The Responsibility of the Artist* (Maritain, 1960), the author maintains a singular focus on the artist, in whom resides faith and the *artistic habitus* as distinguishable yet not separable entities. ‘But leave *distinct* what is distinct. Do not try to blend by force what life unites so well. If you were to make of your aesthetic an article of faith, you would spoil your faith. If you were to make of your devotion a rule of artistic activity...you would spoil your art’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 66). The last musical reflection in the final chapter of the present thesis illustrates Maritain’s position.

<sup>161</sup> A trope which nonetheless is seldom, if ever, afforded such a directly spiritual ancestry.

<sup>162</sup> The melismatic extended incantation on the final vowel of ‘Alleluia’ as an expression of unbridled joy which transcends language.

movement of Western tonal music, from its earliest source (essentially God, then chant) to its artistic apex (the works of Bach). Although Jeremiah exclaims in the context of tragedy, and that of the *jubilus* is one of unbridled joy, both circumstances nonetheless infer an imitative act in which the intellect expresses ‘without discourse’—‘*the mind bursting into voice*’ (Maritain, 1927, p. 188). Returning to *melody*, there is conceivably less of a lacuna in Maritain’s account, and more an implicit recognition of melodic expression as part of his ontology of artistic purity.

## VII – Imitation: the true and the false

We are now ready to return to Maritain’s thesis in the chapter ‘The Purity of Art,’ more alert to the transcendental context and import of his expression ‘the radiance of a form ... and therefore of a truth’ (Maritain, 1935, p. 57)—the *splendor veri*. Returning to the matter of Wagner and Stravinsky, the irony of the paragraph in which Maritain so deeply regretted connecting the two, lies in the fact that it could so easily have been written by Stravinsky himself.

What constitutes the rigor [austerity] of the true classical is such a subordination of the matter to the light of the form thus manifested, that no material element issuing from things or from the subject is admitted into the work which is not strictly required as support for or vehicle of this light, and which would dull or “debauch” the eye, ear or spirit (Maritain, 1962, p. 57).

Drawn alongside Stravinsky’s frequently stated abhorrence of all things Wagnerian, we gain a clearer view of just why Wagner is offered by Maritain as the antithesis of Gregorian melody and the music of Bach.<sup>163</sup> Stravinsky’s excoriating critique of Parsifal might just as well have been penned by Maritain (perhaps less brazenly).

What I find revolting in the whole affair is the underlying conception which dictated it – the principle of putting a work of art on the same level as the sacred and symbolic ritual which constitutes a religious service. And indeed, is not all this comedy of Bayreuth, with its ridiculous formalities, simply an unconscious aping of a religious rite? ... It is high time to put an end, once and for all, to this unseemly and sacrilegious conception of art as religion and the theatre as temple (Stravinsky, 1962, p. 39).<sup>164</sup>

Wagner’s music, indeed, his entire project, is cast by Stravinsky as being a fraudulent imitation in respect of classicism’s true metaphysical ancestry. In his music, matter is not subordinated, but dominates, and thus the potential light of form is extinguished in bombast and interminable

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<sup>163</sup> See Maritain’s comments, ‘Bayreuth is not the heavenly Jerusalem,’ in Chapter 1, ‘Art and Morality’ of *The Responsibility of the Artist* (Maritain, 1960). Here, even Wagner’s moral failure, resulting in the production of *Tristan*, is not a comment on the failure of the artistic value of the work and Maritain is at pains to articulate the clear divide and also the tension between art and prudence. In Maritain (1948, p. 91), Wagner is called ‘the enemy’ albeit by Jean Cocteau, but by implication also Maritain.

<sup>164</sup> First published in 1935.



melody.<sup>165</sup> Surplus of material elements undermine and eschew this light, and thus, the nineteenth-century preoccupation with referentialism in the musical work also appears philosophically retrograde to Maritain—a backward step to the garden-variety meaning of imitation. Certainly, manual dexterity allied with observation of (and some form of reference to) nature may be required at the beginning of a work, but when technique dominates or the work purports to reproduce a given reality, then it has already failed as a vehicle of beauty—beauty which should transcend ‘any external physical object’ (Conley, 2012, p. 242). In respect of the music and rites of the Church and in contradistinction to the art music of Bach, Wagner’s music fails to ‘pray with a great vocal prayer that is elevated to the contemplation which mystic theology calls “acquired contemplation” (Maritain, 1943, p. 101), but instead, parodies it. On every level, it is not too strong, in Maritainian terms, to label Wagner’s music a fraudulent imitation of imitation itself. (Maritain, 1962, p. 225).<sup>166</sup>

Maritain devotes several paragraphs to the way in which painting, sculpture and poetry rely overtly on extrinsic imitations or significations, by virtue of the faculty needed to apprehend them. This only serves to amplify the distinctiveness of the musical signs—‘rhythm and sound’—which unveil ‘the very movements of the soul’ (Maritain, 1930, p. 65) by virtue of the

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<sup>165</sup> Stravinsky is equally scathing of Wagner’s corruption of the principles of melody (see Stravinsky, 1945, p. 62), stating that the music compensates for a lack of order, descends into pure fantasy, and in so doing exceeds the limitations of the ear—the very faculty through which musical expression is comprehended.

<sup>166</sup> In this footnote very close to the end of *The Frontiers of Poetry*, Wagner’s music is described by Maritain as having failed due to the ‘worship of effect.’ The failure arises because the concept is not submissive to [subject to] an ‘object to be made as such or to the right rules of operation thanks to which this object will truly be what it ought to be.’ Rather, it conforms to an external set of ‘clichés and mythology.’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 225). A striking parallel critique exists in Nietzsche’s repudiation of Wagner, concerning the aesthetic effect on the listener. It is summarised in elemental terms by Scruton:

The composer’s floating rhythms are denying the impulse to move with the music in a healthy and reciprocal way: Wagner is not responding to, not wary of, the listener’s soul ... Nietzsche is dismissive of Wagnerian harmony, which he describes (in connection with Parsifal) as ‘a rope of enharmonics’, on which ugly things perform their gymnastics. He means, I take it, that the harmonic progressions are not genuine, but the result of taking chords whole from one tonal centre to another, as in the enharmonic changes used in classical music for special effect ... This use of enharmonics, Nietzsche implies, negates true harmonic movement, so that the music slops around like a sea, instead of moving forward like a river. Thus Wagner’s music is a failure in all three dimensions of musical order: melody, rhythm and harmony. And the failure stems from the adverse use of music, to inflate the sentiments attached to scenes and characters that do not really contain them. To put the point directly: the defects of form stem from defects of content. Because the content is faked, so is the form’ (Scruton, n.d.).

In his noted polemic on different composers, Debussy (1962, pp. 48-49) proffers a far more religious critique of Parsifal than Scruton, noting its remarkably un-Christian characteristics. Debussy’s essays, under the pseudonym ‘Monsieur Croche’ began to appear in 1901, but were not collected and published together as *Monsieur Croche Antidilettante* until after the first world war, and not in English until 1927. The date of the edition used here (1962) is that of the well-known *Three Classics in the Aesthetics of Music*.

faculty of the ear,<sup>167</sup> and making possible the radiance of a form beyond such signs. We should be in no doubt, as Gilson<sup>168</sup> assures us, of the existence of such form in music, for in its absence we should be left with ‘music without being, and one which has reverted to the status of noise’ (Nelson, 2000, p. 167).

Finally, in the closing pages of a chapter which is so central to expanding his whole conception of art—one in which music takes a subtle, yet pivotal role—Maritain arrives at the problematic of expressivity and emotion, almost as an afterword. One tends to find a thesis in musical aesthetics beginning with some account or other of music’s power to induce emotion. Unsurprisingly Maritain does not oblige, for the Thomist foundation of *Art and Scholasticism* ‘corrects the prevailing trends in modern aesthetics’ (Shadle, 2010, p. 86). Having reminded us that the purity of art should be compromised by neither literal, servile nor slavish imitation, nor by technical dexterity, he warns of the danger posed by ‘the pleasant tickling of the sensibility ... if art seeks to please, it betrays and becomes deceitful’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 62). Any means which contrives, suggests or intentionally induces<sup>169</sup> emotive response is vehemently rejected. Conley (2012) adds that Maritain is equally unreceptive to a mimetic account of imitation (as exact reproduction) due to its contamination by ‘materialist practices of art in modernity... socially mimetic art’ which aspires to nothing higher than propaganda. Whereas it is ‘the mission of the artist to pursue formal beauty for its own sake in order to initiate the viewer [hearer] into the knowledge of a spiritual realm’ (Conley, 2012, p. 244). It is only in music that Maritain outlines a very carefully qualified validation of emotive response to an artwork, fully mindful of the composer’s transcendental mission.<sup>170</sup>

[W]hen it produces emotion, it produces precisely what it symbolises. But such production is not its object, any more than a representation or description of the emotions. The emotions which it evokes in the soul by sound and rhythm are the *matter* by which it ought to give us the experienced joy of a spiritual

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<sup>167</sup> Murphy (2004, p. 286) reinforces Gilson’s position that music, of all the arts, is both the most detached from the material world and the highest, most intrinsically spiritual art: it is ‘the most “striking image of that creative élan whose material, as Bergson said, is deposited in its wake like radioactive fallout from the spirit.”’

<sup>168</sup> It is important to stress Gilson’s generally positive assessment of much nineteenth century music and of Wagner in particular. This divergence from Maritain’s position is derived more from Gilson’s own music education and expertise in music, as well as his recipient-oriented (not creation-oriented) aesthetic, rather than any fundamental difference in metaphysical outlook.

<sup>169</sup> Maritain employs the word ‘seduces’ to convey the deceit implicit in art that seeks to manipulate the emotions, or turn emotive response to the making of a work. This conveys the import of Stravinsky’s oft-quoted comment—on narrowly avoiding being run over by a bus, one would definitely feel strong emotions, but one would never then obtain manuscript paper and write a piece to articulate them.

<sup>170</sup> In the notes, Maritain (1962, p. 193) observes Baudelaire’s comment, ‘the good way to determine whether a picture is melodious is to consider it from far enough off so as to understand neither the subject nor lines.’ In other words, a poet, viewing a painting, is describing its essential truthfulness in wholly musical terms.

form, of a transcendent order, of the brilliance of being. So music, like tragedy, purifies the passions by developing them within the limits and in the order of beauty, harmonising them with the intelligence, in a harmony which fallen nature experiences nowhere else (Maritain, 1930, p. 65).<sup>171</sup>

A high view of music indeed, and one which takes us back to the opening of *Art and Scholasticism*, in which the metaphysics<sup>172</sup> of the ancients is proposed as the only proper starting point for a foundational treatise on art, and to escape ‘the immense intellectual disorder inherited from the nineteenth century’ (Maritain, 1930, p. 4).<sup>173</sup> We sense a move towards music at vital points in the text, with the implicit recognition that music’s ineffability offers unparalleled insights into the ontology of artistic creation. In this respect, Stravinsky has proved a most compatible conversation partner at the intersection between philosopher and artist—the sort of confluence which Maritain implies will be fruitful, and which he endorses even more explicitly in *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*. Maritain ‘interprets Aristotle to be referring to a formal condition for the exercise of art, not to the object of the artistic act’ (Conley, 2012, p. 241), and this is precisely the tone of Stravinsky’s ‘aesthetic’—one could say he is preoccupied, almost obsessed, with the formal condition through which he makes his work.

It is true that ‘philosophers inspired by Aquinas have had little to say about aesthetics’ (Haldane, 2009, p. 146)—Maritain exempted—but composers have often said much about the aesthetics of crafting music, and this will be taken up in the next chapter. For Maritain, the most influential artists in Paris between the wars were not the distant subjects of scholastic inquiry, but friends and visitors. *Art and Scholasticism* exists in direct relationship to these interactions, underscoring the originality of the text and making the overlay between Stravinsky and Maritain more intriguing still.

The question of Maritain’s outward approval or disapproval of certain composers temps us to view his references to music in *Art and Scholasticism* in quite black and white terms. Even in the case of Wagner, whilst sources correctly point out that Maritain echoes contemporaneous

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<sup>171</sup> The Scanlan edition (1930) is slightly clearer than the translation by Joseph Evans.

<sup>172</sup> In *The Frontiers of Poetry*, an extended commentary on *Art and Scholasticism*, Maritain describes ‘the more real than reality’ objective of metaphysics and poetry. It would not be a leap too far to exchange the word ‘poetry’ for ‘music.’ Both pursue ‘a spiritual prey, but in a very different manner, and with a very different formal object. Whereas metaphysics stands in the line of *knowledge* and of the contemplation of truth, poetry [music] stands in the line of *making* and of the delight procured by beauty’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 128). McLaughlin (1982) highlights Gilson’s misgivings about the language of cognition and knowledge in art, but Maritain, whilst always stressing that art is a work of the practical intellect in the domain of making, accepts that ‘making’ assumes ‘knowing’ how to make and he seems better equipped to survey the transcendental objective of both metaphysics and art.

<sup>173</sup> In which in which the notion of art and the notion of the beautiful are vitiated (see Maritain, 1962, p. 4).

cultural disgust with Germanic excess, its artistic products and its aesthetic values,<sup>174</sup> what is less acknowledged is that he provided an inward philosophical basis for doing so—one that resounded with the new artists of the early 20th century. In the scholastic manner, it seems crucial to view music as much a mouthpiece of philosophy as one of theology, and through *Art and Scholasticism* Maritain encourages us to see it this way.

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<sup>174</sup> Schloesser, 2005, p.190 and Shadle, 2010, p. 86 stress the influence of Jean Cocteau on Maritain.

## Chapter 4

### A Thomistic philosophy of music: conceivable and essential

Music is a movement of nothing in a space that is nowhere, with a purpose that is no-one's, in which we hear a non-existent feeling the object of which is nobody. And that is the meaning of music.  
(Scruton, 2000, p. 221).

Vae mihi, si non thomistizavero (Maritain, 1931, p. ix). Woe to me if I do not Thomisticize.

In his final published work, the musicologist Peter Kivy writes, ‘one searches in vain, at least in the Anglo-American philosophical tradition, for anything resembling a “philosophy of music” for almost the entire first half of the twentieth century’ (Kivy, 2017, p. 434). This is quite an understatement, for with a few notable exceptions, there is little to be found in the half century beforehand or in Europe either. Kivy goes on to lament more recent efforts which regurgitate emotion-saturated (musical-affect) theories to the point of mania, and he frankly acknowledges that after a lifetime of philosophical inquiry, he is no closer to discovering just how music affects us as it does (p. 435).<sup>175</sup> What he does identify is that the musical flowering of enlightenment idealism is most visible in Schopenhauer then Nietzsche,<sup>176</sup> both of whom granted to music a highly privileged role, although one which severed it from theological values and virtues, as well as from a single transcendental, divine objective. Roger Scruton, the notable aesthete of our time (whilst not shrinking from the social and moral correlates of musical expression) frames music only as a surrogate for religious experience.<sup>177</sup> Notably, he

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<sup>175</sup> Peter Kivy (1934-2017), possibly the most noted music philosopher of recent years, presents a fundamentally post-evolutionary account of aesthetic response, particularly in the matter of repetitive forms satisfying the pleasure instinct. There is no higher purpose, and by dismissing Plato's and Aristotle's comments on music as confusing and any philosophy built upon their foundations as pointless (on account of lack of empirical knowledge of the sounds of ancient music), Kivy excludes himself from transcendental considerations. (see Kivy, 2017, p. 429).

<sup>176</sup> Schopenhauer's account of musical meaning concludes the third book of Vol. 1 of *The World as Will and Idea* (Schopenhauer, 1909, pp. 330-347). It is foundational to Nietzsche, who approvingly summarises it in *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche, 1910, p. 48-50) whilst maintaining the superiority of his own version.

<sup>177</sup> This is clearly demonstrated in Scruton's subtle interpretation and thorough endorsement of the Wagnerian vision. Although speaking of the *Ring* cycle as practically the quintessence of the human need for religion, redemption and love, and whilst recognising the necessity of sacrifice in order to attain spiritual transformation (Scruton, 2009, pp. 129-130), the contrast with orthodox Christian interpretations of these self-same tenets could not be greater. Paradoxically, Scruton highlights this 'inversion' of Christianity in Nietzsche's account (Scruton, 2014, pp. 241-242) as being in direct conflict with the theological virtues. Elsewhere, Scruton states that music 'offers an icon of the religious experience' (Scruton, 2014b, p. 166).

too rejects the ancient doctrine that the transcendentals—the good, the true and (sometimes)<sup>178</sup> the beautiful—stand front and centre of the real experience of musical beauty.<sup>179</sup>

This somewhat cursory opening has a threefold aim. First, to immediately name a very small sample of preeminent individuals who, taken together, encapsulate and articulate much of the post-enlightenment idealist vision of music and musical beauty. To the roster could be added the Frankfurt philosopher and social critic Theodore Adorno; a contemporary of Maritain, whose ‘aesthetics of modernism’ (Paddison, 2011, p. 3) is provocatively voiced through his writings on music.<sup>180</sup> Second, to emphasise that theirs is inescapably the dominant aesthetic landscape with which a firmly realist theological-philosophical account of musical beauty must compete. The notable features of that landscape should, in comparison, highlight the crucial divergences entailed in constructing a Thomistic musical aesthetics.<sup>181</sup> Third, it is to highlight with Kivy, the yawning gap that exists in music philosophy, especially around the turn of the twentieth century, and to suggest that a Thomistic theory of music—one in which the theological and transcendental are recovered—might help to address this lacuna.

The proximity of Jacques Maritain to the period during which some of the most startling artistic developments of modernity occurred, is more than serendipitous. The earlier chapter *Music in Art and Scholasticism* pieced together diverse references to music in Maritain’s revolutionary early masterpiece—pointing to a thoroughly transcendent explanation of musical beauty, ultimately ordered to a single end: God. What Maritain didn’t provide there was a unified

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<sup>178</sup> Murphy (1995, pp. 209-218) helpfully draws attention to the differing and evolving views of beauty leading up to Aquinas, concerning the degree to which it may even be considered a transcendental. This question will be confronted subsequently, as it is logical that music, being the art most removed from material realisation, should grant highly existential insights into the properties of beauty.

<sup>179</sup> Whilst not addressing music specifically here, Scruton’s general stance is captured well in his statement ‘it is an unlikely accident that we humans are guided by our reason toward the true and the good. I incline rather to Kant’s position ... that the truth-directed nature of our understanding is transcendently grounded (Scruton, 2014b, p. 186). This is apparently as far as Scruton will permit a transcendental understanding.

<sup>180</sup> Adorno is preoccupied with truth content in the work, his views of music revolving around the qualities he considers to be authentically modern. Key Adornian traits are autonomy and freedom; hence ‘autonomous’ music should ideally be instrumental, free from extraneous function or representation, and possessing an internal logic. Adorno espouses an aesthetic of ‘total integration and rationalization of the musical work’ (Paddison, 2011, p. 265), which in some ways parallels the Kantian *moments* of aesthetic judgement (albeit relating to the work rather than to disinterested contemplation). Adorno also composed and was a pupil of Alban Berg (1885-1935), whom he greatly admired, and whose works he regarded as the epitome of Second Viennese School free atonality. Adorno’s highly polemical and manifesto-like *Philosophy of New Music*, which juxtaposes essays on Schoenberg and Stravinsky, was first published in 1949.

<sup>181</sup> In notes to the chapter *Art and Beauty*, Maritain refers to ‘Schopenhauer and his disciples’ in whom blossomed ‘an anti-intellectualist divinization of music’ (Maritain, 1935, p. 163). This critique arises in the context of defining beauty.

synthesis of those references. Neither was he forthright concerning the real significance of music.

The present chapter therefore explores the injunction ‘to join the artistic treasure of modern times to a philosophy of art and beauty that is truly universal’ (Maritain, 1931, p. xiii). It debates how a Thomist today could fill the inherited metaphysical void which accompanies the discussion of music in modernity. Composers often reveal acute awareness of the philosophical significance of their craft, and of the lengthy metaphysical history accompanying the creation and role of music, and we will be drawing from a modest sample of preeminent twentieth century figures, mostly contemporaneous with Jacques Maritain. By way of a preliminary example is Luciano Berio’s observation:

The attempt to establish a dialectic between music’s practical and conceptual dimensions goes back a long way and has sometimes assumed radical epistemological importance ... For [Boethius] music was a silent text; it was indeed one of the chief tools of philosophical speculation ... Boethius conceived music above all as a means of knowledge ... The need to conduct conceptual speculations parallel and perhaps prior to concrete musical experience has very deep and long-standing roots (Berio, 2006, pp. 6, 8).

Because music has long been ‘one of the chief tools of philosophical speculation,’ a Thomistic philosophy of music should be a conceivable development in a tradition-constituted and enduring line of inquiry. The chapter confronts the hugely problematic issue of the meaning of music—an art wherein the work acquires no visual or literary form, and which resists explanation of its affective power. The musical work is surely some kind of sensible object, yet one apparently dispossessed of the trappings via which we normally apprehend an object. Scruton’s musings in *Perictione*, above, appear bluntly perceptive.

## **I – Negotiating the inexplicability of music**

At the start of *The Angelic Doctor*, possibly the clearest and briefest introduction to the life and thought of St. Thomas Aquinas,<sup>182</sup> Maritain provides a number of key precepts to define exactly what Thomism is, and how it may be authentically utilised in developing a ‘synthetic and assimilative philosophy’ (Maritain, 1931, p. xii),<sup>183</sup> for us, as it applies to music. And Maritain leaves us in no doubt that this is precisely the sort of endeavour to which Aquinas may be put

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<sup>182</sup> *The Angelic Doctor* (Maritain, 1931) does not attempt a systematic exposition of Thomistic philosophy, but instead provides a broad understanding of the nature and relevance of Aquinas’s thought, particularly set against rationalism, Protestantism and the enlightenment.

<sup>183</sup> The later authorised translation by J.W. Evans (Maritain, 1958) entitled *St. Thomas Aquinas*, reads ‘progressive and assimilative,’ further calling attention to Maritain’s repeated injunctions to utilise actual Thomism in order to make sense of the artistic endeavours of modernity.

to use. To ‘synthetic’ and ‘assimilative’ is effectively added ‘corrective’ as Maritain begins his exhortation.

Contemporary Thomist philosophy will, I hope, devote all its energies to this work of assembly and construction. A beginning had to be made by binding together again the vital cords through which wisdom continues among men, and undoing the great errors which lay like an obstacle in the way of that continuity (Maritain, 1931, p. viii).

There is a Thomist philosophy, there is no neo-Thomist philosophy. We make no claim to include anything of the past in the present, but to maintain in the present the “actuality” of the eternal. Thomism does not want to return to the Middle Ages (Maritain, 1931, p. xi).

Thomism is a form of wisdom. Between it and the particular forms of culture incessant vital exchanges must be made, but it is rigorously independent of those forms. Thomist philosophy, for example, has the most universal principles of aesthetics and yet it would be impossible—that is only too clear—to speak of a specifically “Thomist” literary school, “Thomist” painting, novels or poetry (Maritain, 1931, p. xiii).

By implication, we are cautioned not to attempt to conceive of a ‘Thomist’ music, or ‘Thomistic’ composer, or way of listening. Conversely, we are called to address ‘eternal’ questions and ‘forms of wisdom’ as they are realised in the process of creating music and in experiencing its effects. Simply, the matter of *being* and *existence*—musical first things—must be at the very heart of a Thomistic musical aesthetics; but as we have already observed, we run headlong, with Schopenhauer, into the persistent dilemma of the apparent nothingness of the musical object, as well as its notoriously indefinable affective power.

[Music] stands alone, quite cut off from all the other arts. In it we do not recognise the copy or imitation of any Idea of existence in the world. Yet it is such a great and exceedingly noble art, its effect on the inmost nature of man is so powerful, and it is so entirely and deeply understood by him in his inmost consciousness as a perfectly universal language, the distinctness of which surpasses even that of the perceptible world itself ... (Schopenhauer, 2011, p. 334).<sup>184</sup>

Thinking ‘Thomistically’ about music presents significant challenges. By pointing out that ‘the first point of a Thomist critique must not be “I think” but “*that which is, is*”’ (Cullen, 1999, p. 80), Maritain affirms Aquinas’s utterly realist stricture that ‘that which, before anything else falls under apprehension, is being, the understanding of which is included in all things whatsoever a man apprehends’ (ST. I-II, q. 94, a. 2). The dilemma is compounded. The Thomist

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<sup>184</sup> From the outset Schopenhauer does not deny music’s power, significance or special role in human experience. He comments perceptively on the reality of human encounter with music and of the obscure, yet undeniably real entanglement between things (termed the world) and the self—between object and subject—which accompanies musical experience.



must work very hard to prove what ‘is’—musically speaking—given the resolute lack of solidity which accompanies musical cognition.<sup>185</sup> Music appears to defy the rule that the existence of a thing stands in contrast to its non-existence, but we cannot proceed from such a conundrum as a first principle. Indeed, Aquinas adds, ‘the first indemonstrable principle is that “the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time,” which is based on the notion of “being” and “not-being”’ (ST. I-II q. 94, a. 2).<sup>186</sup> Schopenhauer’s preliminary remarks contain paradox, even contradiction, which, to his credit, he faces. But a chasm opens between that which is (being), and the ‘Idea’ or conceptions of being: between music as a dynamic, living integration of things and self (assimilating the world), and music removing us from the ‘real’ world. In Schopenhauer, the issue of ‘being’ and ‘not being’ is laid bare: in fact it is the exclusivity and apparent autonomy of music which lays Schopenhauer bare, and his solution to music’s inexplicability is to lean almost entirely on quite fanciful analogies. But we will return to this later. For now, Maritain exhorts us to ‘reintegrate the philosophy of being’ and in so doing ‘lovers of paradox and novelty should be the first to rejoice’ (Maritain, 1931, p. 133).

For a Thomistic philosophy of music to be possible, there are further observations to be drawn from Maritain’s injunctions. It is to be a work of ‘assembly and construction’ as there is nothing ready-made or formulaic to be found in Aquinas, his forebears or successors.<sup>187</sup> Critically too, Maritain upholds the integrity and independence of the artform itself—the manner of its creation and its distinctive modes and methods of operation. Correspondingly, ‘[t]he wisdom of St. Thomas is above every particularization’ (Maritain, 1931, p. xiii). So a Thomistic aesthetic of music *should* be an exchange between the ‘wisdom’ of Aquinas and the particulars of musical forms—but an exchange in which neither domain is diluted.<sup>188</sup> To posit a relativist interpretation between the thought of Aquinas on the one hand and music on the other, or by interpreting Thomism according to what is proper to the domain of music, both risk vitiating

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<sup>185</sup> A further discussion beyond the scope of the present work might legitimately question whether the phenomenon of music actually supports Transcendental Thomism, contra Cullen (1999).

<sup>186</sup> This is found in the context of the question on The Natural Law.

<sup>187</sup> See McNerny’s comment: ‘As he develops a theory of fine art from hints and asides in Thomas, Maritain is at the same time applying it to contemporary artists ... It is clear that Maritain is not fashioning a Thomistic aesthetic that will serve merely as descriptive of what is going on in the arts; it is meant to provide both a criticism and a guide’ (McNerny, 2003, p. 96, also p. 169).

<sup>188</sup> Maritain’s definition of artistic creation as a virtue of the practical intellect in the domain of making (see Maritain, 1962, pp. 10-22 and McNerny, 1988, p. 150, 158) reminds us that a musical work is first a real thing that is made and should first be regarded as such. This understanding inclines towards the composer.

the Catholic and philosophical essence of a potential Thomist account. We are also challenged to discover which Thomistic traditions best preserve the dignity<sup>189</sup> and character of music.

Following this, a final point to be gleaned from Maritain's introduction to *The Angelic Doctor* concerns the character of Aquinas's entire work. 'Thomism is a philosophy and a theology' (Maritain, 1931, p. xiii). This is known well enough across the ages,<sup>190</sup> but Maritain urges us to realise the full implications of this.

In this respect [Thomism] partakes somewhat of the nature of Catholicism itself. *Nolite tangere*. Catholicism is a religion, both universal and universalist ... The term "Catholic" applied to something other than this religion, and the term "Thomist" to something other than this philosophy and this theology, become merely material designations referring not to what derives from Catholicism or Thomism, but to the activity in fact exercised in such and such a particular sphere by any particular Catholic or Thomist "subject" (Maritain, 1931, pp. xiii-xiv).

The present chapter asserts that a Thomistic account of music (our subject) is both conceivable and needed; but, Maritain would caution, not at the expense of Catholic or philosophical integrity. To simplify Maritain's rather convoluted statement, our task is to do more than just cement 'material designations' together, hoping for a magical transfiguration that interprets the meaning of music<sup>191</sup>—perhaps the situation where a particular musical work or musical element might be said to exemplify a theological precept, used to demonstrate a well-worn

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<sup>189</sup> S.K. Langer's statement 'the dignity of music demands that it should be autonomous; its existence should have no explanation' (Langer, 1942, p. 236) is startlingly realist in upholding the givenness and immediacy of musical creation or apprehension, and therefore that the first point of a philosophical critique should be to recognise this fact. Kivy (2017, p. 434) suggests that after a lengthy philosophical hiatus, Langer makes the first significant contribution to music philosophy in the twentieth century, *Philosophy in a New Key* being first published in 1941 (pre-dating Adorno's *Philosophy of New Music* by several years).

<sup>190</sup> Etienne Gilson (see Gilson, 1961, pp. 7-15) also poses the question 'what, then, do we call the philosophy of St. Thomas? As he had created it only for the sake of the service it renders Christian wisdom, he himself never separated it from this wisdom to give it a name. Probably he did not foresee that the day would come when scholars would go searching through his works to extract the elements of a philosophy from his theology' (Gilson, 1961, p. 7).

<sup>191</sup> Throughout the section on music in *The World as Will and Idea*, Schopenhauer relies on analogy to 'scaffold' his analysis of the musical elements, which are given to represent degrees of objectification of the will. The problems here are multitudinous, not least in that analogy is a reliable procedure when addressing low-grade or factual explanations for clarification; but it is fraught with difficulty in the realm of high-grade concepts or experiences—into which category religious and musical experience unquestionably fall. As Schopenhauer has already named music as the highest, most separated art, because it does not objectify the visible world, his use of 'parallel or analogy' (Schopenhauer, 1910, p. 336) to make sense of that separation is bound to fail. The use of continual analogy must be regarded as essentially anti-realist, in proving its inability to define what really *is*. Hanink (2013, p. 169) acknowledges the 'inescapable and empirical limits' of analogy, adding, 'the analogates of *esse* are always sensible. So they cannot give us the range of cases requisite for us to grasp *immaterial* analogates of *esse*.'

theory, or worse, where it is claimed to vaguely signify ineffability.<sup>192</sup> Such scenarios, for Maritain, could not rightly spring from Thomism and Catholicism.

Maritain's criterion demands that a work of music should represent more than just a choice ingredient of the presentation of something else—be it theology, epistemology or liturgy. It should belong to the very core of the other: not subordinated to its content, but cooperating on equal terms—this is the sense of Maritain's description of Thomism as containing 'the most universal principles of aesthetics' (Maritain, 1931, p. xiii).<sup>193</sup> A theological aesthetic of musical beauty must wrestle with this; but as we recall, apprehending music truthfully (and harmoniously with the fullness of Christian belief and piety) had also been an anxiety of the Church from the beginning.

We have attempted to set out some basic parameters for a Thomistic musical aesthetic—to state, perhaps obviously, that such a task will inevitably conflict with idealist traditions, but nonetheless to recognise with those traditions that music presents often incomprehensible paradoxes and perplexity, the likes of which are found in no other art. Now it is necessary to return to the vital role of the perception of being, which St. Thomas specifies comes prior to, and is enfolded within, the human apprehension of anything whatsoever. This will suggest ways and means by which the apprehension of being may be musically construed.

## II – The musical intuition of being (musical 'is-ness')

Notwithstanding the often liberal definitions afforded to the term *intuition*, which, as Sullivan (1964, pp. 5-6)<sup>194</sup> notes, prevail in modern philosophy (alongside equally loose connotations of the word *aesthetics*), we proceed on the basis that Maritain builds upon Aquinas. To the broad definition of being given above (that which, before anything else...), we may append a

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<sup>192</sup> Giving short shrift to the 'ineffability' trope, Swanwick offers a quite realist mandate to the teacher of music: 'Gaining understanding is a process of unwrapping layers of intuitively glimpsed meanings, exposing something (though never all) of the why and how of the objects of our attention ... we certainly should have respect for the infolded and inexplicable 'meaning' of music ... without necessarily supposing it to be a manifestation of the divine' (Swanwick, 1994, p. 2).

<sup>193</sup> 'St. Thomas succeeded in constructing a philosophical and theological wisdom so elevated in immateriality that it is really free of every particularization of race or environment' (Maritain, 1931, p. 83). To which could be added, every particularization of artistic expression—that is, we should not expect to find a discrete musical aesthetics contained within his works.

<sup>194</sup> Sullivan (1964, p. 6) notes that this vagueness is at least partly symptomatic of the division between aesthetic experience and creative process, and that the term 'intuition' is indiscriminately applied to both with no degree of exactitude. In footnotes, Trapani (2011, p. 53) comments on the limitations of the term *aesthetics*, pointing to passages where Maritain shows that the modern usage of the word is inconsistent with its etymological meaning. Trapani also notes that Maritain first encountered the notion of intuition as an epistemological necessity in the classes of Henri Bergson (1859-1941).

considerably more detailed exposition which should assist us as we apply it to music, and which interprets the perception of being as intuitiveness.

That which the intellect first conceives as, in a way, the most evident, and to which it reduces all its concepts, is being. Consequently, all the other conceptions of the intellect are had by additions to being. But nothing can be added to being as though it were something not included in being—in the way that a difference is added to a genus or an accident to a subject—for every reality is essentially a being (Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. I, a. 1).<sup>195</sup>

From these principles, we can propose that the experience of music—of musical sound itself, should be an undeniable reality; that it is conceived by the intellect, and importantly, given that it is known via the auditory faculty alone, stands as a cognitive event that is strikingly immediate and highly abstract. Moreover, further intellectual conceptions of the musical experience which may follow, cannot augment the initial ‘epiphanic’ moment whereby an intuition of being (that which is, *is*) is unmistakably grasped. This appears to be the precise sense in which Stravinsky (1947, p. 52) refers to the ‘foretaste of the creative act’ which ‘accompanies the intuitive grasp of an unknown entity, already possessed but not yet intelligible.’<sup>196</sup> Indeed the whole tone of Stravinsky’s remarks on the composing process in *The Poetics of Music* (Stravinsky, 1947) seems predicated on such a fundamental account of the existence of a musical work.

Maritain is more detailed still, for he insists that ‘an intuition of being is vital to an appreciation of the *actus essendi*—the act of being. He places this intellectual intuition in the judgment that follows abstractive apprehension; this prior apprehension itself depending on sense perception’ (Hanink, 2013, p. 167). In short, sense perception leads to abstractive apprehension, leading to judgement entailing intuition of being.<sup>197</sup> McNerny frames this slightly differently in that ‘being is now presented [by Maritain] as an amalgam of apprehension and judgment, the grasp of essence as the potential to exist’ (2003, p. 178), but the basic premise is one and the same.

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<sup>195</sup> Aquinas here cites the Persian polymath Avicenna.

<sup>196</sup> McNerny (2003, p. 177) notes that ‘Maritain invokes a phrase Cajetan uses to describe *ens primum cognitum*: it is being as concretized in a sensible nature *ens concretum quidditati sensibili*. What the mind first knows is the nature of sensible realities; that is, we form ideas of the things we have encountered with our senses. It is not that we form an abstract notion of being; being is grasped ... things are there, they exist, they are beings.’ How music might be interpreted as a sensible reality to be grasped is exactly our task here.

<sup>197</sup> Newton-Smith (1971, p. 131) calls attention to Maritain’s refutation of Henri Bergson (*La philosophie bergsonienne*), wherein Maritain grants intuitive power to the intellect on the grounds that ‘without intuitive knowledge discursive reasoning simply cannot get a start’ (Hanink, 2013, p. 178). Trapani notes that Maritain ‘had learned from Bergson the necessity of using the term “intuition” to identify those non-conceptual human experiences not adequately expressible in concepts. From St. Thomas, he learned that all senses of “intuition” are always and primarily intellectual’ (Trapani, 2000, p. 17).

Importantly, we are reminded that each and every comprehension of the reality of a thing's existence begins in the faculties of the senses, thus inextricably connecting intuition with observation.<sup>198</sup>

How this should be represented in the creation of a musical work is not too difficult to conceive, for the creative mission<sup>199</sup> of the composer is the obvious point of contact between Thomistic principles and music. Attention has already been paid to Stravinsky's scholastic self-identification, but the testimony of some other composers also reveals how they construe the earliest stages of their creative process in ways amounting to an explanation of the intuition of being. In consulting these, however, we have to remember that the language they employ to describe their process may not be technically philosophical, but is revealing, nonetheless. Martini (1959) lists a number of twentieth century luminaries who have provided an account of their processes, methods and underlying philosophical beliefs. Included alongside Stravinsky is Hindemith, Schoenberg and the American modernist Roger Sessions. To the roster must be added Aaron Copland, who in *Music and Imagination* (Copland, 1952) specifically names Maritain, and who offers a broad explanation of the intuition of being in which the existence of a work and the existence of its composer are intimately drawn together.

I must create in order to know myself ... each new and significant work of art is a unique formulation of experience; and experience that would be utterly lost if it were not captured and set down by the artist ... And just as the individual creator discovers himself through his creation, so the world at large knows itself through its artists, discovers the very nature of its Being ... Jacques Maritain has summarized this idea of the necessity and uniqueness of the work of art in these terms: it is the artist's condition, he says, "to seize obscurely his own being with a knowledge that will not come to anything, save in being creative, and which will not be conceptualized save in a work made by his own hands." (Copland, 1952, p. 41).<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Drawing attention to Maritain's distinction between empiriological verification and the philosophical search for quiddity (in Maritain 1998, pp. 148-149), Thomist philosopher John Cahalan points out that 'observations are just a particular kind of existent, awareness of sensibly distinguishable objects; so we can sometimes construct ontosophic definitions for sensibly conceived objects' (Cahalan, 2018, p. 5). It may therefore be entirely possible to construe neuropsychobiological accounts of the existence of music as being harmonious with Thomism's very conceptual structure (see also Cahalan, 1985, pp. 345-350).

<sup>199</sup> Stravinsky's phrase 'the premonition of an obligation' (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 51), reinforces the imperative sense in which a composer fulfils their duty to the work and to their own intellectual process. 'Creative mission' is a more appropriate description than 'work, enterprise,' or 'ambition' might be. See chapter *Music in Art and Scholasticism*, where Stravinsky's overtly religious connotations to this obligatory sense are noted, as well as Maritain's own use of the term 'mission' to convey the scholastic artistic mandate as one of intellectual instruction, as well as of prayer and delight (see Maritain, 1962, p. 22).

<sup>200</sup> Copland's phrase 'I must create in order to know myself' (Copland, 1952, p. 41) is more humanly intuitive than Stravinsky's directly religious statement of being: 'My artistic purpose is to make an object ... I create the object because God makes me create it, as He created me' (Stravinsky, cited in Levitz, 2013, pp. 195,196). Stravinsky, though, is closer to Maritain, for whom 'the apprehension of being implies the existence of the

Copland has eloquently distinguished, and thus united, two intertwined forms of the existence of things: first the characteristics by which the work identifies itself as contrasted to nothingness (it exists because), and second, the apprehension of the work as it exists and is known in the ‘soul’ of the composer (see Newton-Smith, 1971, p. 134). Maritain orders it thus: ‘Precisely speaking, this prime intuition of being is both the intuition of *my* existence and of the existence of *things*, but first and foremost of things’ (Maritain, 1952, p. 88).<sup>201</sup>

Paul Hindemith is more detailed still, describing how that which he terms ‘the musical impression’ (Hindemith, 1952, p. 18)—what we might call the *sonorous imagination*—arises and is perceived in the intellectual faculties of the auditory sense, long prior to audible sound.<sup>202</sup> Judgement of the aesthetic-expressive import of what is perceived ranks far more highly than any subsequent determination of harmonic or thematic material, or the techniques required to realise them. To put it more ‘Thomistically,’ those further conceptions will not modify the initial intuition of the work’s existence, however they are certainly not regarded as something extraneous to the work’s existence and the judgement thereof.<sup>203</sup> The following passages give a flavour of this remarkably philosophical composer’s writing, beginning with a highly logical statement about music and the manner in which its existence imputes form.

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being of God’ (Newton-Smith, 1971, p. 134) and indeed to St. Thomas: for instance in the question of the self-evidence of God’s existence to the human mind. His answer ‘to know that a thing exists, it is not necessary to know what it is by definition, but only what is meant by the name’ (Aquinas, 1952, q. 10, a. 12, ad 4) whilst being applied in this example to God, has clear correlations in human intuitive apprehension. Stravinsky’s statement echoes both.

<sup>201</sup> Stravinsky reflects this prioritisation of the object, saying ‘when I compose an interval I am aware of it as an object ... as something outside me, the contrary of an impression’ (Stravinsky and Craft, 1979, p. 17).

<sup>202</sup> See chapter *Musical Beauty, God and the Church: Historical-Ecclesiological Contexts*, where it is shown that St. Augustine’s sophisticated classification of number in *De musica* dismantles the modern concept of music as separated into three categories of composing, performing and listening. Crucially, Augustine designates a category to the auditory sense itself, defining it as a naturally residing power, or regulating force involved in judgement. And then, judgement itself (*judiciales*) becomes a critical, more superior species of number as Augustine searches for increasingly higher and purer answers to the question of music’s essence. Hindemith acknowledges the influence of Augustine in his own conceptual thinking, beginning his opening chapter of *A Composer’s World* with a thorough endorsement of the philosophical method, enduring value and transcendent objective of *De musica VI*. (see Hindemith, 1952, pp. 4-7). More importantly, he fully accepts Augustine’s designation of the auditory sense as described above.

<sup>203</sup> This presents a challenge to the concept and methods of analysis, the function of which is to abstract elemental features of a work’s existence, or to deconstruct the object (Saxton, 1998, p. 1) in order to appraise in a disengaged and extraneous manner. In analysis, it becomes almost mandated to regard the analysed component as being in some way ‘the music,’ affording it an identity which is not included in the intellect’s first conception of the music. By contrast, at the start of a work’s creation, ‘the separate parts assert an independence, regardless of how closely they may be bound up in the whole ... each separate detail is conditioned by the whole without, however, ceasing to be an entity ... the unity is no longer a result; the artist begins with unity and works towards multiplicity’ (Saxton, 1998, pp.3-4).

Whatever sound and structure it may assume, remains meaningless noise unless it touches a receiving mind. The receiving mind must be active in a certain way if a transmutation from a mere acoustical perception into a genuine musical experience is to be accomplished (Hindemith, 1952, p.18).

With a pragmatism that St. Thomas would relish and clearly mindful of St. Augustine's questioning, observational clarity, Hindemith infers that however we want to account for its being, music proves that its existence is bound up in matter—matter which becomes conceptualised as it is actualised in form, and as it is identified with the composer perceiving it. Concerning the 'musical impressions' which arise in the mind, he writes:

These vague feelings may provide more valuable musical sensations than any overwhelming musical manifestation ever could. Certainly those moments of inner ringing and singing are but minute chemical and electrical transformations in the cells of our brain, but we nevertheless have to understand them as the very origin of musical composition (Hindemith, 1952, p. 19).

The musicologist should be entitled to question our use of the word *form*. It is usually taken to indicate the distinct and specific architectural 'shape' of a work, or a customary design to which the work adheres. In many respects, the musicological sense connotes a structure imposed from without, and it is a considerable way removed from the creative intuition of the composer. Rather, what we are describing here is the received structure of a 'genuine musical experience' as it solidifies the base matter (*essentia*) of 'acoustical perception' into a perceivable, known whole. It is, so to speak, the form before form.<sup>204</sup>

Hindemith draws extraordinarily close to a Maritainian interpretation of the intuition of being—one which points to the sheer necessity of the intuitive act in gaining a further grasp of anything whatsoever. The experience of the beginning of a work must certainly entail distinct intellectual leaps concerning the material object to be known, the subjective self, and the possibility of nothingness as contrasted to 'being-without-nothingness' (Newton-Smith, 1971, p. 134); and notice too that the term 'evaluating,' clearly invokes the judicial sense.

If all evaluating perception of music or an equally appreciative manner of performing can always be traced back to preceding experiences, there must have been in each human being's life a moment when a first conscious apperception of a musical impression did not permit any reference to former ones (Hindemith, 1952, p. 22).

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<sup>204</sup> Here too there are distinct echoes of Aristotelian-scholastic hylomorphism, in which 'form is immanent in sensible matter such that it enters into actual composition with matter' (Cullen, 2000, p. 45). In his chapter, Cullen outlines the transformative influence of hylomorphism on the development of visual art and sculpture from the Gothic to the Baroque. How this should relate to the art of music would therefore revolve around the degree to which musical sound is construed as sensible matter.

In all these passages we are afforded a glimpse of the composer's intellectual perception—that is, the intuition of musical being. These are outstanding examples of the 'amalgam of apprehension and judgment' and of 'the grasp of essence as the potential to exist' (McInerny, 2003, p. 178). We are also confirming that musical creation displays the apprehension of being highly existentially, as it concerns acoustical perception alone.

In Roger Sessions' view (in Prausnitz 2002, p. 251) the auditory faculty, in fulfilling its imaginatory role, has the ultimate authority in musical understanding, and that failure to experience music in the 'audible silence of the mind' means that there can be no response to it. Intuitive apprehension is taken to be *the* prime action in the creation of a work and Sessions calls attention to the inadequacy of analytical explanations of the musical elements—they are quite unable to encompass this dimension.<sup>205</sup> He defines intuition as 'simply a result of the intensive and pertinent functioning of the aural imagination' (Sessions, cited in Prausnitz, 2002, p. 96). Copland is well aware of differing iterations of post-enlightenment aesthetic theory. His basic position is that these converge at the place of conception and that all composers share a common intuitive impulse—an apprehension that can only be described as virtually melodic. Stating that whilst Hanslick might have vaguely claimed that an inward singing *prompts* composition,<sup>206</sup> or that for others, composing supposedly fulfils a cathartic function; the reality is that to a composer, 'singing *is* feeling and the more intensely felt the singing, the purer the expression. The precise meaning of music is a question that never should have been asked, and in any event will never elicit a precise answer' (Copland 1952, pp. 12-13).<sup>207</sup>

As Maritain states, 'the intellect tends to express and utter *outward*, it tends to sing, to manifest itself in a work' (Maritain, 1953, p. 55). 'A description of the general character of intuition, 'according to Maritain, as 'that which is simply opposed to discourse or discursive reasoning' (Sullivan 1964, p. 13) complements the patently realist outlook of those composers who have, paradoxically, attempted to discuss their creative process. Philip Phenix notes that Maritain categorically rejects the idea that artistic inspiration is a supernatural incursion 'separate from

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<sup>205</sup> In his third chapter of *The Musical Experience*, Roger Sessions (1950) stresses that 'the logic of sensation and impulse' which governs the first realisation and further development of a musical idea, cannot and should not be analytically extractable.

<sup>206</sup> Critic Eduard Hanslick's 1854 text *On The Beautiful in Music* became something of a formalist, 'pure music' yardstick in all subsequent musical-aesthetic discussions in the latter half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.

<sup>207</sup> Copland (1952, p. 13) draws on Langer's phrase, 'subtle complexes of feeling that language cannot even name, let alone set forth,' from *Philosophy in a New Key* (1942) in order to stress that musical understanding as opposed to discourse is the *modus operandi* of the composer.



the domain of actual human existence,’ or ‘unconscious feelings coming up into consciousness,’ but that he endorses the idea that ‘inspired intelligence goes beyond the rationality of discursive logic. It has the logic of imaginative insight, in which the mind is illuminated by significant direct perceptions’ (Phenix, 1966, p. 95). This is a good basic explanation of intuition as it concerns artistry.<sup>208</sup>

The notion of the intuition of musical being and the possibility of a work’s existence is especially harmonious with role of the maker of a work—apparently the most existential realisation of this notion in all art.<sup>209</sup> Only in the composer does immaterial identification with the being of things find no concept, word or action beyond determining a specific and unique tonal ‘form’—even *tonal existence*—from a limitless set of possibilities. The being of a work in all its particularities—its very existence, unmistakably follows the intuition of its being. Accompanying this intuition, and enfolded within the very same act of perception (as Copland clearly articulates), arises the tangible consciousness of a composer’s own existence, both in fulfilment as the unique maker of a real thing, and more deeply still, as they exist *as being*. That is, an intuition of the existence of the self (the soul) that is immediate to the intellect.<sup>210</sup>

Might such a sustained focus on intuition and creation risk decontextualizing the composer and work altogether? It could be argued that it is impossible to separate creative process (albeit the ontology of that process) from social, cultural, economic or political considerations, as well as the conditions imposed for the commission of a new work. Such factors, whilst not lessening

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<sup>208</sup> This observation from educational theorist P.H. Phenix refers directly to Maritain’s rejection of inspiration viewed as ‘a kind of mania,’ associated with either Platonic dualism or Freudian psychology. Phenix’s interpretation of Maritain’s view, that insight, perception, intuition, are the consummation of reason and humanness, reveals no particular awareness of an Aristotelian-Thomistic background. Similarly, Phenix draws from Maritain’s *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* without noting that the sense of intuition to which Maritain affords ‘significant direct perceptions’ is actually poetic, non-philosophical and divinatory. This category will be fully explicated in the final chapter of the present thesis.

<sup>209</sup> Higgins (1986, p. 665) observes that music ‘on Nietzsche’s analysis directly expresses the ground of being that underlies all existence.’ Nietzsche goes well beyond Schopenhauer in reifying music, not just ‘because it represents the universal basis of human experience, the will,’ but because music actually engenders an experience in which ‘all aspects of the human being appear integrally bound to the oneness of being’ (Higgins, 1986, pp. 669, 670). The critical difference, therefore, between a Nietzschean and a Thomistic concept of being, concerns the definition of being itself, for in Nietzsche, the expression or realisation of being achieves its zenith, in his Dionysian musical metaphor, with the complete supremacy of the human will.

<sup>210</sup> Trapani (2011, p. 50) identifies this as the third sense of the word *intuition* as defined by Maritain within the broader category of philosophical or intellectual intuition. The first sense, that is ‘*intellect immediately informed by essence*’ is the absolutely restricted realm of God, Angels and the Beatific Vision. The second sense, that is ‘*intellect immediately informed by a psychic similitude or species impressa*’ is a strict meaning of sense perception in which ‘an object in concrete reality produces in us, by its action, a psychic similitude of itself by which we perceive it directly’ (Sullivan, 1964, p. 7). The fourth, abstractive or intentional intuition is dealt with presently.

the aesthetic achievement, might also be claimed to shape the way in which a work is conceived. There are three immediate answers to this critique. First, with Maritain, it is imperative to distinguish the constituent parts of what may ultimately be a united, whole experience. A fundamental argument of the present thesis is that an ontology of artistic creation is anyway seldom distinguished in music philosophy. Second, other contexts surrounding a work's creation may legitimately be construed as part and parcel of the experience of the composer—the subjective self; but Maritain's virtue-centred approach stresses that the making of a work is not shaped in the prime instance by such external factors.<sup>211</sup> Lastly, Maritain and certain composers are striving for the ideal, the highest possible explanation to account for the genesis of a work. Although the musician, in their intuitive and perceptive cognition, is never devoid of contextual influences, these remain, in the superlative creative condition, uninfluential.

We are starting to conceive of a Thomistic interpretation of music; one of musical generation, at least in its earliest manifestations. It involves sense perception, abstractive apprehension, and judgement containing intellective intuition. Determining the beginning of a work is to assume the reality of its existence, for the composer exceptionally affirms the realist maxim that to be is to be the subject of an act of existing—that is 'to "grasp intuitively, or *to see*, the being, the existence, the extra-mental *esse* of that subject.'" This is the intuition of being. Its object, the *actus essendi*, drives the actualization of whatever is real in accord with its potentiality' (Maritain, 1997, p. 220 in Hanink, 2013, p. 168). This patently should apply to music and the witness of composers would suggest it does. Consequently, our opening quotation from Scruton's *Perictione*—the familiar trope concerning the apparent 'nothingness' of music—now seems far less robust.

There is, however, a further and deeper aspect in which our understanding of the musical work and its generation is illuminated by Thomistic principles, and again this is mirrored in the way in which the musician intimately identifies with the work that is made. That the work is a real object we are beginning to prove, but it is only capable of being known through its actualisation in form—form, which we must remember, remains in its earliest development in the faculty of the auditory sense alone, and which we have taken to mean the solidification of acoustical perception. Hindemith (1952, p. 21) may distinguish between 'the auditory-musical' and 'the imaginary-musical,' but he imputes no lesser degree of reality (actuality) to the latter, and thus

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<sup>211</sup> Critically, the role of art and artist is not to be socially mimetic (Conley, 2011).

affirms the principle that ‘whatever is known, it is known by reason of its actuality’ (Iturrieta, 2009, p. 8). Therefore, the question arises as to just how the work is actually first known as a reality—as an object of intent; and at this point the relationship between composer (creator) and listener (receiver) also begins to come into focus. How does immaterial identification with the being of things actually occur?<sup>212</sup> There is still an epistemic gap to fill.

### III – Being, intentionality and aesthetic experience (music ‘is-ing’)

We have so far associated the intuition of being, existence, extra-mental *esse*, with the artistic act of composing—an ontology of composing, or more exactly an inquiry into those cognitive-creative actions of the intellect present at the genesis of a musical work. It seems a particularly apt way of thinking about musical creation, and one that starts to resolve the paradoxes and inexplicability of music’s existence and power, so frequently acknowledged.<sup>213</sup> From other perspectives—those of the performer or listener—it may possibly be more complex to construe the musical work as granting an intuition of being, because a first intuition of the work’s existence was not one’s own: it is somewhat secondarily grasped. It appears more remote or detached from the intuition of the composer, the maker of the work. Conversely, the listener’s aesthetic experience could be claimed to offer a discrete, intuition of being that is quite separate to and distinct from that of the creator of the work (see Sullivan, 1964, pp. 5-6). In all this we are reminded that aesthetics is heavily biased towards phenomenological inquiry and to reception. For instance, in questioning whether sounds are material objects, Scruton (1997, pp. 3-9) begins his entire inquiry from a reception standpoint, overlooking the reality of the sound’s existence and the fact that it came to be in the first place.<sup>214</sup>

Here, a distinction can usefully be drawn between *reception* and *experience*, in which we again diverge from more common musicological usage. The frequent sense of ‘reception,’ at least in

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<sup>212</sup> In *The Musical Idea*, Arnold Schoenberg addresses the issue of comprehensibility, coherence and the epistemic link between composer and listener. Perhaps unintentionally he notes that whilst the musical object exists, it is matter that is, as such, unknowable, unless ‘the organisation of intelligible musical ideas, logically articulated’ (Schoenberg, 2006, p. 22) leads to comprehension. How this should occur in the prime instance, is unclear to him, but Schoenberg nonetheless recognises the epistemic ‘gap’ for what it is.

<sup>213</sup> For instance by Karen Armstrong in *The Case for God*, who (with George Steiner) argues persuasively that ‘music confronts us with a mode of knowledge that defies logical analysis and empirical proof. It is ‘brimful of meanings which will not translate into logical structures or verbal expression’ (Armstrong, 2010, p. 6). But this familiar trope is weakened if taken solely as tacit acceptance of the proof of ‘an inexpressible otherness’ and ‘transcendent presence in the fabric of the world.’ By only stressing music’s ‘explanation-less-ness’ and in failing to provide any further account of music’s existence, the ineffability metaphor is challenged by a realist account which distinguishes that which is, how it comes to be, and the circumstances of its apprehension.

<sup>214</sup> It is worth the reminder that ‘while modern studies in aesthetics may be concerned with one or the other aspects of “aesthetic experience,” Maritain is not’ (Trapani, 2011, p. 58).

formal work, is more akin to analysis than it is to aesthetic experience. The highly musically literate critic sets out to provide a language for and a commentary on a work, or what they believe listeners ought to experience.<sup>215</sup> This may offer insights into aspects which the untrained musician may not know, but has the effect of detaching the listener from the possibility of native (connatural) understanding. The disparity between idealist (what ‘should’ be) and realist (what is) approaches is ever present.

The approach taken by Sessions and Hindemith, however, is more integrated. Sessions regards all involved—composer, performer, listener—as not just collaborators (which seems a rather perfunctory way to construe the musical experience) but as active participants in an essentially single experience. The ideal aim of the listener, for instance, is ‘to apprehend to the fullest and most complete possible extent the musical utterance of the composer ... in a total creative process, which was originally undifferentiated and which is still essentially indivisible’ (Sessions, 1950, p. 9). This is significant. By stressing the totality and indivisibility of the musical creative process, and by interpreting the first part of that process as ‘utterance,’ Sessions has effectively claimed that nothing can be added to the work which is not included in the first awareness of a work’s existence: admittedly a Thomistic reading, but one supported by instinct. A performance that in some manner defies this precept, appears inauthentic. Sessions points out that the flow of musical impulse from composer to listener is an experiential reality, and the intuitive grasp of the reality of a work in its entirety is said to occur very dynamically. We are not so much removing distinctions<sup>216</sup> between participants, as working with them (but not losing sight of the primacy of the composer’s intuition). But the exact manner via which what is known, is known—our epistemic gap—still remains hazy.

In deliberating the intellectual perception of music, Hindemith, too, does not make an especially sharp distinction between the apprehension of the composer and that of the performer or listener. (Hindemith, 1952, pp. 19-22). In so doing, he allows for the possibility of generally applicable aesthetic explanations and for a high degree of overlap between the musical roles. Likewise, Hindemith recognises intuitive intellectual actions (and thus judgements<sup>217</sup>) occurring in every *perceiver* of music, from the expert to the novice, the trained

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<sup>215</sup> The *Essays in Musical Analysis* by D.F. Tovey are a preeminent historical example, wherein the writer presumptuously guides the naïve listener towards an almost exclusively technical understanding.

<sup>216</sup> We have already noted that Augustine’s species of number in *De musica* 6 dismantles modern divisions of the musical experience, but here it seems prudent to work with them, as do our composers.

<sup>217</sup> In the passage between sections 2 and 3 of the chapter *Perceiving Music Intellectually* (Hindemith, 1952, pp. 17-26), the composer repeatedly emphasises the role of judgement, and the influence of St. Augustine comes through strongly. Describing what amounts to two distinct species of number—the ‘previous audibly

and the untrained, the composer, the performer and the listener.<sup>218</sup> The following passage reveals a profound understanding of the nature of musical existence—contrasted to non-existence—as manifested in the example of the musically ‘immature’ person.

Consequently there exists a primordial musical experience of a very primitive nature, and we must assume that it comes into existence in the undeveloped being’s mind by perceiving a fact of life that is common to both him and to music, namely motion. The novice in his earliest encounter with music seeks for sensations corresponding to those that he knows as being caused by his own acts of motility. Their organisation according to space, duration and intensity ... serves as measurement for the penetrating audible impressions ... (Hindemith, 1952, p. 22).

It is given that the same manner of operation of the intellect will occur in the mature musician, because music operates in one and the same way, and judgement of audible impressions is a general human action. It is only a matter of degrees of quality which distinguishes between the novice and the expert. Motion (a state of non-stasis) is recognised as a hallmark of music and also of ‘primordial musical experience,’ and thus is invoked the human capacity to make an intuitive ‘leap’ between the two by virtue of what Hindemith terms cognitive ‘motility.’<sup>219</sup> This evokes the first sense in which Aquinas sets out to prove the existence of God, stating: ‘for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality’ (ST. I, q. 2, a. 3). The vital elements of ‘space, duration and intensity’<sup>220</sup> are pronounced by Hindemith to be the formal vehicles (communicative structures) of apprehension, and the motions or variations of these same elements are thereby the means through which both music and the sentient self are known at

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musical’ and ‘imaginary musical experiences’ Hindemith states: ‘A judgement of a most recent musical impression depends for its establishment on such antecedent experience, and serious musical enjoyment in turn depends on the preceding judgement (p. 21). In *De Musica* 6, Augustine (2002, p. 328) discusses antecedent experience, termed *recordabiles* or ‘memorial numbers’. For Augustine, it is logical that they originate somewhere in sounds previously thought or heard. They are not dependent on chronological equivalence with any of the other number species in order to exist discretely; but memory *does* require an ontological equivalence with the other types for the melodic matter to be imprinted in the first place.

<sup>218</sup> Although noting that for many an unschooled listener, consciousness of existence and conscious knowledge are frequently seen as ‘the deadly antagonist of the emotions which apparently are the immediate and undisturbed effect of an active perception’ (Hindemith, 1952, p. 20).

<sup>219</sup> Connoting the scientific principle of independent existence by virtue of metabolic energy, Elliott Carter (in Edwards 1971) firmly rejects the idea of a musical ‘moment’ and endorses only musical ‘motion.’ Citing Leonard Meyer and A.N. Whitehead, and emphasising tensions, expectations and teleological process, Carter also construes the composer’s psycho-physical impulses and resultant musical sounds as a framework around which the work develops. Carter’s view is a direct response to music’s purely sonorous nature.

<sup>220</sup> A similarly Augustinian composite of the essential nature of musical sounds.

the most nascent level.<sup>221</sup> Sessions is more detailed, proposing that ‘we gain our experience, our sensation of time, through movement, primarily, which gives it content for us’ (Sessions, 1950, p. 15), but also suggesting how that content becomes an epistemic certainty. Musical sound as it is first perceived is spontaneously judged according to the effort needed to respond to it, and by anticipating degrees of tempo, accent, stress; contour, tension, release: the *aesthetic* qualities, for want of a better word. ‘The ear, through the logical elaboration of its own impulses and demands, gradually discovered or created a system or relationships which enabled it to hear coherent patterns of sound and rhythm’ (Sessions, 1950, p. 35). Simply stated, what is anticipated, is already in some way present.

We should be cautious imputing to Hindemith’s or Sessions’ ideas a Thomistic explanation of being which they themselves did not (although Hindemith’s debt to Augustine is very pronounced). But one cannot escape the congruence. Haldane (1983, p. 235) maintains that ‘throughout his writings [St. Thomas] characterizes cognition in terms of existence,’ and so manifestly do artists—musicians most abstractly.<sup>222</sup> On the question of *how* a thing can be known, then, Aquinas states it quite universally: ‘This is the perfection of a knower qua knower, for something is known by a knower only in so far as the known is somehow in the possession of the knower ... in which way it is possible for the perfection of the entire universe to exist in one thing’ (Aquinas, 1952, q. 2, a. 2). The fact of ‘the known’ being ‘somehow in the knower’ introduces the concept of intentionality: that is the admittance of a ‘form of existence in which the knower can be the object and the object can be in him without either violating their natural beings’ (Newton-Smith, 1971, p. 135). It is ‘the power to receive other forms’ (Haldane, 1983, p. 235)<sup>223</sup> and it is ‘the bearer *of the thing to be seen*’ (Maritain, 1997, p. 311), or heard.

For Maritain, this intentionality—what Aquinas terms the *esse intentionale*—is the key to understanding the very broadest definition of the intuition of being in an abstractive, philosophical sense.<sup>224</sup> It is an account of human intellectual perception, ‘a state of affairs in

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<sup>221</sup> Throughout S.K. Langer’s work, this type of comparison is drawn many times in a more psychological sense. Langer proposes that the dynamic patterns of human experience correspond to the primal formal relationships in all music. For an interesting new study re-appraising Langer, see Kozak (2020).

<sup>222</sup> ‘We are creators because we think ... we also fill the external material world around us with our own thought and being’ (Wojtyła, K. in Hanink, 2013, p. 179). See also *Letter to Artists* (Pope John Paul II).

<sup>223</sup> In a rare, but explicit paragraph on music in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas paraphrases St. Augustine’s teaching that ‘each affection of our spirit, according to its variety, has its own appropriate measure in the voice and singing, by some hidden correspondence wherewith it is stirred’ (ST. II-II, q. 91, a. 2 ad 3). The context is different to our current discussion, but the evocation of intentionality is striking.

<sup>224</sup> Maritain also offers the following definition: ‘Precisely as an intellect, it is capable of grasping intuitively: by becoming some thing *intentionaliter* it sees that thing, or “reads in it” ... (Maritain, 1997, p. 311).

which the object of cognition is in the subject in such a way that he or she can be said to become it' (Haldane, 1983, p. 235), and where the knower identifies with the intelligible being of the thing.<sup>225</sup> 'To know is to become another in so far as it is another' (Maritain, 1953, p. 5).

I use the word "intentional" in the Thomistic sense, ... which refers to the purely tendential existence through which a thing – for instance, the object known – is present, in an immaterial or supra-subjective manner, in an "instrument" – an idea for instance, which, in so far as it determines the act of knowing, is a mere immaterial tendency or *intentio* toward the object (Maritain, 1998, p. 120).

Trapani (2011, p. 42) emphasises the immateriality associated with such an act of intuitive apprehension—something that could, at face value, appear to undermine our emphasis on the reality of the sound-as-imagined, the 'inner singing and ringing' (Hindemith, 1952, p. 18) of the composer.<sup>226</sup> Then again, 'if what Maritain calls an 'abstractive intuition' is nothing more than an intellectual awareness of the nature of a material reality, then it matters not whether the reality apprehended is actually concretely present or only ideally present to the knowing subject' (Sullivan, 1964, p. 8). This is founded in Aquinas, for whom cognition is a form or nature present in *esse intentionale*: 'For the reason why we actually feel or know a thing is because our intellect or sense is actually informed by the sensible or intelligible species.' (ST. I, q. 14, a, 2). The unique problems arising from music's 'explanation-less-ness' (often characterised as *ineffability*) are drawn into much sharper focus because they tangibly substantiate, not refute, a Thomistic account of being. To argue that music 'achieves the greatest possible distance from explicit statement, while still inviting us to 'enter into' its expressive content,' as does Scruton (1997, p. 364), is already to admit identification *with* the musical object, and tacitly to acknowledge abstractive intuition as a vehicle of musical intelligibility.<sup>227</sup>

Haldane suggests that Aquinas's theory may well be open to challenge (Haldane, 1983, p. 235), and particular challenges will be addressed in the next section. But we have seen that in the situation of music, the *esse intentionale* makes logical sense, because the whole question of what constitutes material reality is intractably part and parcel of the nature and experience of music—well-attested, and contentiously debated since antiquity. We are in need of a plausible

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<sup>225</sup> Terming it 'scholastic jargon,' Scruton (1997, p. 4) nonetheless describes an intentional object as 'being defined by the mental state that 'intends' or focuses on it.'

<sup>226</sup> Sessions emphasises the primacy of vocal response, concretely or ideally present: 'What I believe will be indisputable is the fact that with only slight qualifications we carry over these primitive responses from music produced vocally to our more complex response to that heard instrumentally, independently of the particular character of the instrument involved' (Sessions, 1950, p. 18).

<sup>227</sup> The sense in which 'the known' (what is perceived) is 'somehow in the knower' (the perceiver) logically implicates the performer and the listener, as Sessions (1950) describes. The notion of intentional identification substantiates the case for an indivisible and undifferentiated intuition of a work's existence by all participants.

account for the moment and manner in which a musical work comes into existence, not least because composers reliably construe sound from the perspective of the impulse needed to produce it. Various composers do describe this in varying ways. Elliott Carter characterises the earliest stages in his own process as a desire for ‘communicative intent’—one which precedes (is logically prior to) all subsequent rational development, and upon which those developments are contingent (Carter, 1971 cited in Fisk, 1997, p. 371).<sup>228</sup> Maritain’s ‘abstractive intuition’—the intentional identification of the thing known and the knowing intellect—builds on Thomistic thought, but also submits that ‘all conceptual knowledge of material realities is intuitive ... both at the beginning and the end of discursive reasoning – as opposed to reasoning itself’ (Sullivan, 1964, p. 8).<sup>229</sup>

The distinction between ‘the auditory-musical’ and ‘the imaginary-musical’ (Hindemith, 1952, p. 21), where no lesser degree of reality is assigned to the latter, and wherein form is ascribed to an object, may truly be an ambiguous division. But it is a constant reminder that material reality in music is an inherently fluid affair, and that musical knowing, in the prime instance, can reliably be understood as the auditory instance of a philosophical intuition.<sup>230</sup>

#### IV – Musical ineffability and the intuition of being (the ‘is-able)

Our discussion has just revisited the term *ineffability*—a word which, to this point, has been mostly circumvented. If the term *Intuition* has been popularly seized upon to provide ‘an epistemological deus ex machina to save the day when a particular kind of knowing cannot be explained in any other way’ (Trapani, 2011, p. 43), then ineffability has probably suffered a worse fate. We need to outline some ways in which the term can be navigated more precisely, admitting that what is ineffable is, by definition, unlimited and beyond explanation, but equally acknowledging that ‘musical knowledge, ineffable or otherwise, really is perceptual knowledge’ (Raffman, 1988, p. 688). Something is cognitively known.<sup>231</sup> Discussion of the

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<sup>228</sup> See Chapter *Music in Art and Scholasticism*, where Stravinsky characterises the desire to create on exactly these terms, describing the need for communicability as ‘the premonition of an obligation’ (Stravinsky, 1947, p. 51), and further adds ‘So far as I am concerned, I cannot separate the spiritual effort from the psychological and physical effort; they confront me on the same level and do not present a hierarchy.’

<sup>229</sup> Especially as opposed to restricting form to *a priori* categories, and the Kantian assertion that being in itself is unknowable (see Newton-Smith, 1971, p. 135).

<sup>230</sup> In stating this so affirmatively, we recognise that Maritain articulates an important further distinction between philosophical intuition and non-philosophical or divinatory intuition. This latter category will form the basis for discussion in the final chapter *Music and poetic knowledge: a separate, special analysis*.

<sup>231</sup> In *Philosophy in a New Key*, Langer discusses ‘the unexplored possibility of genuine semantic beyond the limits of discursive language,’ borrowing from Russell the term ‘*the unspeakable*’ to propose a realm of meaning which far exceeds ‘the sphere of subjective feeling, emotion and wish, from which only *symptoms* come to us in the form of metaphysical and artistic fancies’ (Langer, 1942, p. 86). Langer’s view of ineffability,



intuition of being, as it concerns music, should inevitably entail deeper reflection on ‘the impossibility of translating ‘what it [music] is like’ into a description’ (Scruton, 1997, p. 364). Indeed this precise enigma began the chapter. The nub of a basic definition of musical ineffability lies in our inability to articulate what music expresses with any degree of specificity. This is heightened because music is irrefutably and highly expressive; and so it is the content or import of that expression, coupled to its affective-ness, which most frequently garners the term ‘ineffable.’

Now, by taking a transcendental turn,<sup>232</sup> we can propose in the broadest way that what is humanly perceived and perceivable, in the process of being known, also makes us aware of an ineffable quality of being—even of ‘a transcendent presence in the fabric of the world’ (Armstrong, 2010, p. 6). What may be indescribable is not indistinguishable. Immediately, the objection may arise that ‘ineffability’ and ‘transcendence’ are not strictly the same, and perhaps they are not. But to reduce, with Scruton (1997, p.364), the entirety of possible senses of the word *ineffable* to ‘first-person awareness of a world that is neither ours nor anyone’s,’ seems infuriatingly vague yet tantalisingly close to an acknowledgement of transcendence.<sup>233</sup> Common experience, likewise, blurs the distinction between ineffability and transcendence—music appearing especially capable of inducing awareness of ‘divine otherness.’ With Maritain,<sup>234</sup> John Paul II locates intuition of being firmly within a trajectory of knowing that ultimately leads from and to the divine. At the same time, he preserves the distinction between

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whilst not reaching beyond a psycho-physical picture of the human person, is broad and generous, and does not conflict with Maritain’s assertion that intuitive knowledge of distinguishable material realities arises prior to and stretches beyond discursive reasoning. At a popular level, Leonard Bernstein was a passionate advocate for semantic understanding free of linguistic construal, with musical ineffability taken as a realm of knowledge in itself. (See Bernstein, 1958, 1990).

<sup>232</sup> Proposing the need for a cognitivist account of the musical aesthetic experience to complement traditional philosophies, Raffman (1988, p. 688) fails to identify that it is due to the idealist, enlightenment heritage of those philosophies that a comprehensive realist philosophy of mind or ‘doctrine’ of being has never been granted to music, at least since antiquity.

<sup>233</sup> In a number of places, Scruton appraises Schopenhauer’s attempt to negotiate the ineffability of music in *The World as Will and Idea*. The realist-antirealist distinction is magnified by Schopenhauer’s admittance that ‘the content of music is again real but ineffable’ (Scruton, 1997, p. 159). For Schopenhauer, music is taken as a direct picture of will itself (because it supremely exceeds conceptual explanation), so it could never point to higher, more transcendental realities. Unless taken on Schopenhauer’s own terms, this is not a realist account in the slightest—rather, transcendental idealism. Scruton acknowledges the absurdity of trying to relate the notion of ‘one undifferentiated and indeterminate will’ with ‘the concrete phenomena of human emotion’ (Scruton, 1997, p. 365), but he offers no alternative to an inward-turning to the self, and never admits of a higher-reaching towards the divine. In this respect, Schopenhauer and Scruton both epitomise an actual severing of the link between ineffability and transcendence. Scruton himself admits to tending in the direction of antirealism (see Scruton, 1997, pp. 367-368).

<sup>234</sup> ‘[The] intuition of being, without which there is no authentic metaphysics, has absolutely nothing to do with an intuition of God here below’ (Maritain, 1997, pp. 243-244). As a theologian, though, John Paul II makes the distinction somewhat softer.

intuition of being as the ground of metaphysics, and the intuition of God, which is proper to the domain of theology and faith.

[T]he philosophy of being is a dynamic philosophy which views reality in its ontological, causal and communicative structures. It is strong and enduring because it is based upon the very act of being itself, which allows a full and comprehensive openness to reality as a whole, surpassing every limit in order to reach the One who brings all things to fulfilment. (*Fides et Ratio* #97).<sup>235</sup>

Here there is no sense of complete disconnect between the ‘causal and communicative structures’ arising from the *actus essendi* and the unrestricted, transcendent reality of God.<sup>236</sup> Furthermore, the ascription ‘full and comprehensive openness,’ if applied to musical apprehension, can be interpreted to characterise a sort of cognition wherein the musical perception of elemental structures such as space, duration and intensity, induces consciousness of what ultimately lies above and beyond them.<sup>237</sup> Interpreted this way, the transcendent objective of John Paul’s phrase strongly echoes that of St. Augustine in *De musica* 6. In that work, the various types of musical sound or elements are surpassed and overwhelmed in the ascent to (divine) reason, exactly to attain ‘the One’ in whom those elements are fulfilled. Music which is ‘harmonious to the ears’ is even more ‘pleasing in truth and wholeness to the soul’s sentiment’ (Augustine, 2002, p. 376); and this expression of truth is grounded in the experience of things which possess ‘being.’ For Augustine also, oneness is the ground of musical and spiritual recognition. Musical *ineffability* is now more clearly and more transcendently demarcated—without severing it from reality and being on the one hand, or emptying its vital meaning (as indescribable) on the other.

We have been drawn towards the question of musical ineffability through our discussion of the existence of a work and the intuition of its being. Now, we are better placed to view objections to the possibility of such an intuition—indeed to the whole thrust of Maritain’s assertion that

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<sup>235</sup> The existential Thomist John F.X. Knasas draws our attention to paragraph 97 of *Fides et Ratio*, as being an unusually detailed exhortation to study and apply Thomistic doctrine, specifically as it applies to being. (Knasas, 2003, p. xviii). It had become more customary, observes Knasas, for Papal writings only to acknowledge the general wisdom of St. Thomas.

<sup>236</sup> James Hanink states it clearly: ‘Persons, in their freedom and intelligence, transcend material objects ... The human person, rather, is an epistemic and metaphysical bridge linking the physical with the spiritual. Our distinctive status enables us to mediate between the material universe and its Divine source’ (Hanink, 2013, p. 176). There are surely few better human endeavours with which to furnish this assertion than in the creation, mediation and contemplation of music.

<sup>237</sup> This is the sense consistently inferred by Stravinsky; and in the introduction to the chapter *The Philosophical Approach*, Hindemith (1952, pp. 2-4) emphasises that the values of music which are stable and enduring are those ‘domiciled in the more esoteric realms of our musical nature.’ The immaterial and spiritual aspects precede all other creative considerations.

without intuition of being, no other mental abstraction or formulation can commence. By questioning the intuition of being in light of music's ineffability and transcendent nature, we are equipped to answer two specific challenges on a quite human, experiential level. These objections are termed 'sensory limit objections' by Hanink (2013, p. 169), the first draws attention to Étienne Gilson's argument that because cognition is never devoid of images, intuition must be bound to the *esse* of sensible objects—of contingent beings. Accordingly, the first intuition of the existence of a musical work must arise solely from perceptible harmonic matter. The composer cannot 'conjure' a work, so to speak, *ex nihilo*, or entertain the idea that a work might exist apart from the sensible object (almost imputing divinity to its existence). A case might be made for this latter situation to infer a kind of *ipsum esse subsistens* (subsisting being), but this is a stretch, given that the description is used by Aquinas, of God, to express what is uncreated and non-composite (Davies, 1997, pp. 515-516).

A second challenge, related to the first, points out that 'analogates of *esse* are always sensible. Thus, they cannot give us the range of cases requisite for us to grasp *immaterial* analogates of *esse* ... an analogy of being cannot extend beyond the sensible beings upon which our knowledge is based' (Hanink, 2013, p. 169).<sup>238</sup> This is to claim that whatever immaterial, ineffable and spiritual qualities music is said to possess, we are restricted to perceivable materiality—we are sensorially bound—in order feel, understand or judge the import of any creative intuition. How might a musician help us respond to such challenges? Are not these 'sensory limit objections' something of a reversal of the reality which confronts every composer—bringing a work to existence often from *outside* the limits of image and contingency, as well as from beyond the discursive and descriptive? Whilst not offering such detailed technical analyses of compositional philosophy as Stravinsky or Hindemith, Michael Tippett confronts these challenges directly.

There is a knowledge concerning art, and this knowledge is something quite different from the immediate apprehension of works of art, even from whatever insight we feel we have gained by perceiving and responding to works of art ... Philosophy, in the sense of which we speak of Platonic or Christian philosophy has often assigned limits or directions to art ... (Tippett, 1989, p. 40).

Both objections, then, erect an epistemic barrier by asserting that whilst the sensory faculties are instrumental to the grasp of being (which no Thomist should deny<sup>239</sup>), they also mark the

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<sup>238</sup> Paradoxically, Schopenhauer is forced to confront this problem with music; only he is not attempting to provide analogates of being, but rather, and in often very remote and far-fetched ways, analogates of will.

<sup>239</sup> As Maritain's comment confirms: 'the visible sensed thing is "the touchstone of judgement" ... The metaphysician must enter "the depth of existence through a sensitive (and aesthetic) perception which is as

character and limits of that apprehension. It is to agree with St. Thomas that every reality is essentially a being (Aquinas, 1952, q. I, a. 1), but to counter that not every reality-being is intuitively apprehendable. This is the problem. To try and answer this musically, we again turn to the condition of music's highly abstract and entirely auditory character, and in so doing, we are reminded that from antiquity, the essence of sound itself has been bound to 'scientific' considerations and to the philosophy of nature.<sup>240</sup> Hindemith recalls that 'Augustine acquainted us with the necessity of perceiving music first before any qualitative comprehension could result' (Hindemith, 1952, p. 17),<sup>241</sup> so musical being (*esse*) presumes musical essence (*ens*),<sup>242</sup> and this is a logical preliminary answer.

Then from the composer's perspective, a still more palpable description of the relationship between essence, the apprehension of being and formal intelligibility is envisaged by construing the nature of cognition wholly musically. The composers whom we have consulted incline in this direction,<sup>243</sup> and the musicologist Edward Cone puts it this way:

Musicians not only think music and think about music; they think about music by thinking music. Or more concisely, they think music about music ... Thinking music about music is equally the source of much of the composer's original work as well. If composition in the fullest sense of the term means not only inventing musical ideas but also putting them into intelligible form, it is bound to involve this kind of musical thought (Cone, 1994, p. 473).

This is the sense in which Copland (1952, p. 41) interprets Maritain directly to characterise musical cognition. Nothing can be conceptualised except by laying hold of one's own being from the depths of obscurity and beyond the limits of sense, and this knowledge can never solidify into musical forms except through an intuitive growth that is entirely and exclusively 'musical.' Tippett identifies a similar condition from the perspective of the

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pointed as it can be ...." (Murphy, 2004, p. 168). Converting this statement to 'the *audible* sensed thing' our discussion can be framed as an inquiry into the precise nature of what is termed 'audible.'

<sup>240</sup> Hanink (2003, p. 170) draws together a few comments by Maritain which invite us not to forget that the intuition of being does not usurp natural philosophy. '[M]etaphysical intuition,' Maritain writes, 'is formally independent of the philosophy of nature' and yet 'materially and as to us, it presupposes the philosophy of nature [...].' In affirming *esse*, moreover, we can scarcely forget essences and natures. Maritain rightly warns us that '[I]f you abolish essence, or that which *esse* posits, by that very act you abolish existence, or *esse*.'

<sup>241</sup> Using the phrase '*acoustical perception*' (Hindemith, 1952, p. 18) seems a highly apt way of negotiating the boundary between music-as-imagined and music as sounded.

<sup>242</sup> Augustine's dialogue in *De musica* 6 may surely be characterised in these terms. Indeed the interrelationships between the species of auditory number which precede judgement (qualitative comprehension), firmly presuppose musical essence. Moreover, that the ascent to God, which is the aim of Augustine's inquiry, is construed as an ascent to the divine essence.

<sup>243</sup> Aaron Copland passionately defends the communicative, expressive intent of the modern composer. Significantly, he states that the musical thoughts via which that intent is realised in a work 'are not to be confused with literary ones' (Copland, 1949, p. 11); they are wholly musical.

listener: '[m]usic in the hands of great masters fully and truly embodies the otherwise unperceived, unsavoured inner flow of life (Tippett, 1989, p. 46).<sup>244</sup>

Confronted with the problematic of musical ineffability, we do not need to consign ourselves to cognitive silence—if we 'think music about music.' This is to explain ineffability from the actual givenness of music's essence, better equipping us for a metaphysics or causal inquiry into the genesis of musical matter and form, but importantly, not limiting intelligibility. For Maritain and our composers, this is the context and the milieu for the intuition of being (see Hanink, 2013, p. 170). When the musician 'thinks music,' they affirm existence just by doing so—existence as conditional on nature; and they affirm what Maritain calls 'authentic existentialism' (Maritain, 1959, p. 13).<sup>245</sup> But there are still further, more familiar ways in which the intuition of being may be 'musically' defended—ways which return our inquiry to transcendence. In simple terms, music super-exceeds the empirical; it stems from our cognitive capacity to transcend materiality and it grants impressions of remarkable fullness, even a religious 'consciousness.' These oft-stated truisms are based upon common, real experiences<sup>246</sup> which need little defence (except from extreme post-evolutionary materialists); but they do require an epistemic anchor to avoid slipping into clichés or the kind of vagueness criticised by Kivy (2017).<sup>247</sup> Tippett, though, has no trouble offering a broad and comprehensive account of music's transcendent orientation, based on the act of being, the intuition of which accompanies experience of the finest music.

On the serious side, music has always been associated with religious rituals and been a favoured art for expressing certain intuitions of transcendence. That is to say, certain music, to be appreciated as it is, expects a desire and willingness on our part to see reflected in it transcendent elements, unprovable and maybe unknowable analytically, but which infuse the whole work of art (Tippett, 1983, p. 46).

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<sup>244</sup> This is the precise sense described by Langer in her symbolic account of music (Langer, 1942).

<sup>245</sup> From the beginning of *Existence and the Existent*, perhaps Maritain's most celebrated work, the author traces what he terms 'modern *libertistic* metaphysical systems' back to Descartes, and to 'God as conceived as a pure act of will. Driven to its conclusion, this would give us a divine Existence devoid of any *nature* ... This, in the last analysis, is why the God of Descartes is a will entirely free from every order of wisdom (a position which St. Thomas looked upon as blasphemy)' (Maritain, 1959, pp. 13-14). It is not hard to see a correlation in Schopenhauer's 'anti-intellectualist divinization of music' (Maritain, 1935, p. 163), in which music is conceived as the highest objectification or picture of will itself, as stemming from Descartes's position.

<sup>246</sup> Knasas emphasises the Aristotelian-Neo-Thomistic understanding that 'Human knowing basically proceeds *a posteriori*. Human knowing derives its content from a contact with reality. The normal locus of this contact is sensation ...' (Knasas, 2003, p. 4-5).

<sup>247</sup> By comprehensively rejecting a metaphysical approach (as well as the witness of composers themselves), Kivy (2017) wistfully consigns himself to silence in the face of the circuitous search for musical meaning.

To reiterate, music superlatively facilitates an ‘openness to reality as a whole, surpassing every limit’ (*Fides et Ratio*, #97). But to put some musical ‘flesh’ on this assertion, we will consider a particular acoustical perception of space, duration and intensity—those essential elements which we have noted are shared by sentient awareness itself and by music (our ‘*form before form*’). It could be in an exceptionally striking melody. It matters not whether the perception of this melody has arisen in the composer or the listener, the trained or the untrained, what is first known is the reality of its presence—one that is indescribable and experienced as though it could exist in no other form.<sup>248</sup> Judgement that the melody exists is needed and this could occur in several ways. On the simplest level, there may be just a naïve awareness that the melody exists at all,<sup>249</sup> but as Copland stresses, ‘music is immediate; it goes on to become’ (Copland, 1952, p. 2). The immediacy of such simple cognisance does not rely on a particular awareness of the dynamic relations of melodic space, duration or intensity.

For others, cognition of various specific degrees of melodic motion—awareness of the relative nuances of the melody’s scope, length and strength will call to mind an especially important, corresponding aspect of the self. Such perception is able to give a degree of ‘formal clarity to these analytically unknowable transcendent intuitions’ (Tippett, 1983, p. 46); to understand something of the melody’s sonorous image and to apprehend the way it sounds in respect of its ‘beauty, roundness of tone, warmth, depth, edge, its balanced mixture ... (Copland, 1952, p. 22). Whichever way we characterise the experience,<sup>250</sup> a concept of being arises from the apprehension of that striking melody. As Hanink (2013, p. 172) concludes: ‘the existential impact of such experiences reaches beyond their empirical starting points ... they draw our attention to a range of distinctive experiences that can trigger the intuition of *esse*.’ ‘Epiphanic’<sup>251</sup> is not too strong an appellation for such musical intuitions that lucidly bear witness to musical ineffability,<sup>252</sup> for ‘[t]here is an unconscious part in each work – an element that Andre Gide called *la part de Dieu*.’ (Copland, 1952, p. 46). That music exceeds the empirical is categorically no barrier to forming an intuition of its existence, and of

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<sup>248</sup> John Rutter describes the satisfaction derived from having written a melody accompanied by ‘the sense that it’s inevitable – that you can’t imagine it having been written in any other way’ (Rutter, 2020).

<sup>249</sup> We recall the fundamentally Thomist assumption behind this observation, that the existence of a thing always contrasts to its non-existence.

<sup>250</sup> Under the heading ‘Judgement and Intuitivity’ Maritain considers judgement, ‘the second operation of the mind,’ from the point of ‘the intuitive character of certain judgements’ (Maritain, 1997, p. 312).

<sup>251</sup> ‘Aesthetic experience’ would not suffice as it is such a nebulous term. Equally, as Hindemith (1952, p. 29) states, ‘the term “musical feeling” is vague and ambiguous ... if we replace with “emotional reactions” we know more precisely what is meant.’

<sup>252</sup> Similarly, what are often articulated as social and cultural meanings and contexts acquire deeper ontological significance.

understanding that fact in a thoroughly real way. The character and limits of apprehension are not restrictive, they are broad and expansive; and by surpassing every limit they orient the perceiver towards a higher, transcendent end. Rather than the intuition of being amounting to an intuition of God (the sensory limit objection), we distinguish in every intuition ‘a personal path to the unrestrictedly real’ (Hanink, 2013, p. 174).

Further still, musical intuition witnesses to a creative and unique aspect of cognition—acts which are not reducible to empirical verification, but which evince reality over and beyond the capacities of our auditory faculty, and which may be experienced with enough strength to stimulate an intuition of being. Foremost is the exercise of freedom. The composer, in contemplating the creation of a work, freely and absolutely distinguishes between various possible actions, and in receiving a work, one freely assents to those distinctions. This is not that our sensory operations or experiences are severed from our cognitive acts; not in the slightest,<sup>253</sup> but rather that they are prerequisites for free, unqualified, creative acts, shorn of all logical analysis or empirical proof.<sup>254</sup> In and of themselves, such cognitive acts abundantly widen and deepen the particulars from which arise a concept of being that exceeds materiality, and are therefore, logically ordered to transcendence.

## V – Final paradoxes

The intuition of being begins in a judicative grasp of the *esse* of sensible things. But this intuition is not wholly bound to sensible things in its realization. Paradoxically, artistic perception underscores this very well—notwithstanding its sensorial *modus operandi*—for the possibility of being detached from the sensible, together with the exercise of totally free cognition (a sign of humanity), actually points to a superabundance of being. This says something very important about the character of art, and more conclusively it distinguishes music. ‘In music ... we find an independence from the given physical world ... music is a higher, more spiritual art’ (Nelson, 2000, p. 166).

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<sup>253</sup> Hindemith stresses the firm grasp of reality required in those cognitive acts, stating: ‘music is not something nebulous, is not created out of nothing by the artist’s unconscious furor, is not a hazy utterance hazily perceived ... in producing and receiving music you must keep your feet on the solid ground of our earth, although with your imagination you may rove through the universe’ (Hindemith, 1952, p. 28).

<sup>254</sup> Armstrong (2009, p. 6) observes this particular situation in music, not from the point of free and cognitive acts evincing the intuition of being, but only from the limits of language—a far more familiar trope. However, her claim (from listening to a late Beethoven quartet) that ‘we experience the certitude of a divine meaning surpassing and enfolding ours,’ applies equally well to the present argument. From either point of view, awareness of ‘otherness’ is the inevitable result. Invoking the St. Matthew Passion and Beethoven’s 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, Michael Tippett characterises the existence of a great artwork as the ‘formal clarification of transcendent intuitions’ (Tippett, 1983, p. 46).

We have spent considerable time attempting to merge a vital Thomistic theme, that of the intuition of being, with musical understanding—all the while attempting to outline and defend a thoroughly realist musical aesthetic. This has, unsurprisingly, segued into a discussion of musical ineffability and transcendence. It therefore seems apt to highlight a paradox, which strictly should have opened the present discussion, but which, by leaving until last, recognises the uncertainty or fluidity which has, and always will, persist round music. Concerning the first operation of the mind—sentience itself, Maritain writes:

The agent or illuminating intellect draws from the sensible real, which has been grasped by the perception of the external sense, and then interiorized by the imagination, the determination (*species impressa*) of the intellectual faculty which enables this faculty to know, to utter within itself, always under the action of the illuminating intellect, a *species expressa*, an idea, a concept or mental word by means of which it perceives the intelligible, then seizes it in exercised act (Maritain, 1997, p. 311).

At which stage, then, does music appear; *species impressa* or *species expressa*? If the former, then the composition of both the ‘sensible real’ and the ‘external sense’ affords a hugely expanded definition of both musical reality and the auditory faculty—nothing less than a *species impressa* of ‘acoustical perception’ (Hindemith, 1952, p. 18). If the latter, then music is akin to the expressive carrier of a thing to be made and heard—an idea, concept or mental word (which we have anyway proposed to mean ‘thinking music about music,’ or a musical *verbum mentis*). Augustine tends to the former—his philosophy of music is rich and extensive, and deeply spiritual: Aquinas and Maritain, would perhaps incline to the latter, or to a unification of the two. But we can leave this unanswered and reflect on the paradox. What has been outlined, however, is that the genesis of a work of music—its very being—is an especially powerful instance of the kind of philosophical, intellectual intuition as suggested by Aquinas and developed by Maritain.<sup>255</sup> John Knasas encapsulates this in a rather beautiful analogy, which serendipitously returns us to the pivotal definition of being given by St. Thomas himself.<sup>256</sup>

Being has an unspeakable richness to it. Though visual examples are often used for intellection, it might be better to use an auditory example. Just as a chord has an intensity and richness not found in any one note, which explains why certain harmonies pierce us, so too being is the chord heard by the intellect.

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<sup>255</sup> The realm of non-philosophical, divinatory intuition and poetic knowledge will form the backdrop to the final three chapters, ‘Music and Poetic Knowledge: a Special, Separate Analysis.’

<sup>256</sup> In answering the question whether being (in idea) is prior to goodness, St. Thomas provides a very pertinent metaphor, stating that ‘being is the proper object of the intellect, and is the first intelligible thing; as sound is that which is primarily audible’ (ST. I. q. 5, a 2). Musical sound, so construed, is knowable in so far as it is perceived. Our discussion has attempted to circumscribe the quality or type of auditory perception as it relates primarily to the intuitive, intellectual activity of the composer.



Any thing in its uniqueness is just another note in the chord of being ... Nothing, if it is anything, ever leaves the chord and only adds to its richness (Knasas, 2003, p. xviii-xviii).

But, *pace* Scruton, a final word should go to a musician—an artist—in whom the reality of a works' being is so existentially realised in the sonorous image, and so intimately bound to self-knowledge. 'And the world at large knows itself through its artists, discovers the very nature of its being through the creations of its artists' (Copland, 1952, p. 41).

In memoriam Roger Scruton (1944-2020)

## Chapter 5

### Music and poetic knowledge: a 'separate, special analysis'

#### Part 1

Music is perhaps the most significant of all [arts].

But music, I think, requires a separate, quite special analysis (Maritain, 1953, p. 4).

At the root of the creative act there must be a quite particular intellectual process, without parallel in logical reason, through which Things and the Self are grasped together by means of a kind of experience or knowledge which has no conceptual expression and is expressed only in the artist's work (Maritain, 1953, p. 34).

A pianissimo tympani roll, a deep A flat in the cellos and double bass, and then the melody begins. Quiet and elegant, simple and unadorned; gently unfolding in long, languid phrases—just the viola, a flute, two clarinets and a bassoon. The purity and sincerity of the music is profoundly moving—it is honest and good. It has said all that needs to be said. So begins *Symphony No. 1, Op. 55* by Edward Elgar. (Ex. 1, in Appendix. 1).

This limited portrayal of the first twenty-five bars of a work, attempts, in a few simple observations, to capture one thing—the reality most directly presented to the senses: a quality which declares itself immediately to the mind and which is straightaway pleasing. Paradoxically, what I am seeking to name is not engendered *by* the particulars I have briefly outlined, but *through* them—a more primitive apprehension of the work (and of myself). This is a piece of music I return to a lot, and these are my own observations; but what is it that so moves me—what has captured my attention?

Further reflection will illuminate. The melody has a subtle richness that is not overbearing or intense, but warm and resonant. It is played not only in unison but at the octave. The distinctive timbres of the instruments, dark and woody (with just a hint of sharpness), appear wholly congruent with, and even conjoined to the melody's character. These opening bars could surely not be rendered any other way, in the sense that the melodic character could only have been achieved with this scoring and texture. Although unhurried, the music is not devoid of pulse or momentum—far from it.<sup>257</sup> Underneath, the cellos and double basses articulate a quiet,

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<sup>257</sup> There are noteworthy variations of tempo in the historic and recent recordings of this work, which, it could be argued, participate in forming contextual associations. However, whilst a range of tempi across recordings or performances may all evidence conformity and integrity—that is, an adequation of the work to the intellect (*truth* in performance and reception), as opposed to tempi which stray outside acceptable boundaries and are perceived as such, this forms only a part of the tapestry of subjective-emotive response in this personal reflection.

unbroken line of quarter notes, equally simple but more insistent, and almost passacaglia-like,<sup>258</sup> which proffers a glimpse of the melody's harmonic potential. This juxtaposition of the 'foursquare' with the longer, more rhythmically ambiguous melody above it only serves to accentuate and distinguish the melody's restrained discourse. What the listener cannot see—the notes on the score—are prefaced '*Andante, Nobilmente e semplice*.' The composer had something in mind.<sup>259</sup>

Each particular in the excerpt, then, displays a kind of unity of action in setting forth such an intelligible theme. But still, none of this constitutes the explanation that I am wanting. It neither addresses the felt emotional satisfaction and pleasure that has been induced, nor does it bind me to the work—making the music my own. On the other hand, what I am grappling to articulate *does* arise through the attachments I hold to the work of notes and sounds, of instruments and tone colours, of melody, rhythm and harmony. Of course the material *could* be rendered differently; but not here and not in this exact apprehension.<sup>260</sup> Elgar's manipulation of musical elements is crucial to the creation of the work's character, but in isolation, none of them guarantee such an experience. The sense of completion and satisfaction has been procured *through* the scoring and texture, as light passes through stained glass. Is it conceivable that this unspeakable quality—this attribute which diffuses through and beyond the work, whilst remaining consubstantial with it—might simply be termed *poetry*? Or even *beauty*?

This highly personal opening to the chapter is partly by way of shaking down the intensely theoretical speculations of former chapters—getting straight to the experience of beauty in music and in an actual work. It is to take Aaron Copland (1952, p. 41) at his word—that the nature of being is vividly illuminated in and through the created work. But it is also to remain consistent with the tone of each chapter of the present thesis: that is, a firm emphasis on the

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<sup>258</sup> *Passacaglia* is a form of ostinato-based work, employed from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, with *Ostinato* being a general term to describe a persistently repeating pattern of notes or longer phrase. The Passacaglia came to be characterised as fairly serious in style, mostly in triple time (as contrasted to the present example), and is usually composed over a recurring bass line.

<sup>259</sup> Performance directions in a musical score may indicate something of the expressive essence or aesthetic import of a work. Frequent in classical-era first movements in Common Time, for instance, is the direction '*Allegro Maestoso*'—an apparently contradictory (fast, lively *and* majestic) term, which actually indicates the felt or emotive quality passing *through* the particulars of tempo and metre. Similarly, *Andante Nobilmente e semplice* conveys the character as unhurried, moderate, with a feeling of simple, unsentimental grandeur.

<sup>260</sup> As indicated previously, the sense described here does not relate to a specific recording or performance of the symphony, but more to an amalgam of felt, 'memorial' connotations—a rather Augustinian understanding of the experience wherein the work exists and is enlivened because it has previously been known.

origins and qualities (virtues) of the sounds and works which are created or apprehended. To observe how music is really ‘known’ and under what conditions.

It is the contention of Jacques Maritain, in *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Maritain, 1953), that both *poetry* and *beauty* are indeed proximate terms for the kind of ‘knowing’ experience just described, and in this magisterial aesthetic text, he advances a richly detailed account of how and why this should be the case. Some thirty years separate *Creative Intuition* from *Art and Scholasticism*,<sup>261</sup> and Maritain’s progression of thought towards a more subjective,<sup>262</sup> interior understanding of the creative process, as well as an increasing reliance on the works and words of poetry in order to support his analysis, is reflected in the orientation of this chapter. But what Maritain proposed in *Creative Intuition*<sup>263</sup> was daring and not without its critics.

### **I – The ‘nonconceptual’ and ‘nonconceptualizable’ – a controversial possibility**

In the chapter *A Thomistic Philosophy of Music: Conceivable and Essential*, the philosophical-intellectual structure of a ‘Maritainian’ account of music was established; viewed especially through the creative, mental-intuitive processes of the composer. In this was nothing that particularly challenged the notion that a concept of some sort must have imprinted itself on the mind at the genesis of the composing process. Of course, the explicit subtext of that chapter and the present thesis is that *concept* is construed in the realist tradition—relying upon the direct attainment of the real (the discovery of something which exists), as contrasted to enlightenment formulae wherein ‘the mind directs the focus of its attention back upon its operations and contents secondarily’ (Trapani, 2011, p. 35). Trapani also reminds us that ‘the tradition of realist or Thomist epistemology is generally but conspicuously silent on any forms of knowledge that are connatural, nonconceptual, affectively intuitive, and “more experience than knowledge”’ (Trapani, 2011, p. 166). It is against this background that Maritain appears to challenge tradition, on the premise that the imaginative experiences of art require an unrestricted version of the functioning of the intellect itself.

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<sup>261</sup> Textual references to *Art and Scholasticism* in the present chapter are all drawn from the widely used 1962 translation by Joseph Evans. The chapter *Music in Art and Scholasticism* intentionally compared every edition.

<sup>262</sup> Robert Fallon notes that ‘although Jacques Maritain interrogated the nature of poetic knowledge in several studies, scholars have struggled to clarify his views ... they have overlooked the fundamental importance that Maritain invested in subjectivity’ (Fallon, 2002, p. 284).

<sup>263</sup> Martini (1959, p. 2) correctly lists Maritain’s other works which treat of art, but only Trapani (2011, pp. 50, 51) identifies Maritain’s specific epistemological texts which have a direct bearing on the types of knowing experience found in *Creative Intuition*. The works concerned are: *The Situation of Poetry* (1955), *Existence and the Existent* (1948), *Ransoming the Time* (1941), *The Range of Reason* (1952), *Approaches to God* (1965).

But reason, or the intellect, is not merely logical reason; it involves an exceedingly more profound—and more obscure—life, which is revealed to us in proportion as we endeavor to penetrate the hidden recesses of poetic activity. In other words, poetry obliges us to consider the intellect both in its secret wellsprings inside the human soul and as functioning in a nonrational (I do not say antirational) or nonlogical way (Maritain, 1953 p. 4).<sup>264</sup>

It is also with the realist tradition firmly in mind that Heath (1954) writing in *The Thomist*, offers the first contemporaneous review of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, published just a year earlier. He addresses the central epistemological challenge of Maritain's text, implying an overreach or unwarranted progression of thought which parts company with Aquinas.<sup>265</sup> Heath writes 'But to the statements that poetic knowledge is "neither conceptual nor conceptualizable," is "ineffable in itself ... is not abstractive ... has no intelligible boundaries," we cannot but dissent' (Heath, 1954, p. 586). On the other hand, Dougherty (2010, p. 78)<sup>266</sup> finds Maritain's epistemic descriptions to be entirely 'faithful to the classical tradition as represented by Aristotle and Aquinas.' We may have leaped straight into the centre of an argument before distinguishing its rival proposals, but there is no more succinct a way to introduce Maritain's radical expansion of knowing beyond philosophical-intellectual intuition.<sup>267</sup> Whether it is Thomistic or not, his theory, or 'class' of *poetic knowledge* is exactly what it has just been stated to be—containing intuition as *non-philosophical*, and reality as *non-conceptualisable* (see Trapani, 2011, pp. 50-51).

Heath turns to Aquinas in order to support his contention that 'the soul can understand nothing without an intelligible species, or without a concept.' It is 'the ordinary way of knowing extra-mental reality approved by St. Thomas' (Heath, 1954, p. 586); in other words, that 'the intelligible species is to the intellect what the sensible image is to the sense' (ST. 1, q. 85, a. 2). Maritain will apparently contradict the Thomistic precept that outside of the mind or intellect there is no possibility of (nonconceptual) knowledge available to the human person. But here

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<sup>264</sup> The words intellect and reason are taken as synonymous inasmuch as they 'designate a single power or faculty in the human soul' (Maritain, 1953, p. 4).

<sup>265</sup> Gilson, too, argued that Maritain was not presenting Thomistic metaphysics but rather an epistemology that strayed from an authentic interpretation of Aquinas. Eco (1988, pp. 38-39, 200) also views several aspects of Maritain's aesthetics as constituting a departure from Thomism. For instance, aesthetic pleasure (beauty) according to Eco, should be taken as the cessation of the effort of abstraction, judgement and the formation of a concept; whereas for Maritain it occurs, apparently, prior to 'the labour of abstraction.' Wilson's rebuttal of Eco is detailed and helps to clarify Maritain's own position. (See Wilson, 2017, pp. 215-221).

<sup>266</sup> In his appraisal of Maritain's *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, Dougherty (2010, p. 74) states: 'A philosopher's attitude towards art is of necessity deeply influenced by his theory of knowledge, and it can tell us almost as much about the philosopher as a well-wrought intellectual biography.' Dougherty views Maritain's epistemological emphasis as a strength and not as undermining authentic Thomism.

<sup>267</sup> Or radical 'departure,' according to one's final judgement of Maritain's thesis.

is a caveat. As we shall see, Maritain's intense focus on the self in *Creative Intuition*<sup>268</sup> actually serves as a facilitator for the deepest scrutiny inside the mind and intellect—to its inmost preconscious recesses. The real experiences of art and artist—of the perceiver struck by beauty—demand the most exacting inquiry, precisely because these experiences are so veiled by the inner life of the self, resisting facile explication and abstractive analytical content (as the opening reflection observes).

Heath (1994, p. 587) goes on to observe that there may be a degree of latitude in Aquinas, regarding what the intellect apprehends and how the affections of the soul are known. Leaning on Augustine, St. Thomas states 'The affections of the soul are in the intellect ... as the thing caused is in its principle, which contains the notion of the thing caused. And so Augustine says that the soul's affections are in the memory by certain notions' (ST. 1, q. 87, a. 4, ad 3).<sup>269</sup> A philosophy of music does seem an excellent place to test the extent of conceptual leeway, for as we have repeatedly asserted, the nature of musical sound distils any inquiry to a highly abstract degree. When the art has no physical, material object, yet is simultaneously the epitome of expression and emotive affect, the problem of what is conceptualised, if anything at all, becomes quite important.<sup>270</sup> It is not incidental that Aquinas turns to Augustine, who, with other Patristic luminaries also scrutinised the conceptual import of what was felt or heard as a matter of the gravest theological importance. Sean Sullivan summarises the nature of this quandary.

But apart from the natural signs which serve to manifest sentiment, experience often shows there to be a compelling urge to express this kind of affection in images or in an artistic combination of images so that affection might be manifest definitively, as it were, by way of concrete representation. A song, the simple humming of a melody, the "exaltation of the mind bursting into voice" as St. Thomas said of canticles, appear as effortless and perfectly natural releases of affection which cannot be contained *ad intra* and which, because they are expressed in sonic structure, come to assume, however metaphorically, a relatively precise representation in the concrete. (Sullivan, 1964, p. 108)

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<sup>268</sup> In contrast to his focus upon the work, rules, and general precepts of art in *Art and Scholasticism*.

<sup>269</sup> Heath is unsure how, if at all, such 'notions' are different from a concept but a noteworthy point to take from this is Aquinas's reliance on St. Augustine, not only in his reply but also in the corresponding objection to the question as to whether the intellect understands the act of the will. The reply doesn't so much counter the objection as interpret Augustine's meaning.

<sup>270</sup> Martini (1959, pp. 6-7) compares the views of Kant and Schopenhauer in respect of this exact point. That is, Kant, in *The Critique of Judgement*, relegates music to the lowest rung of the arts because it 'provides mere bodily pleasure' (Weatherston, 1996, p. 63) or agreeable pleasing sensations, unlike the 'formative arts' which serve as a permanent carrier of concepts. Schopenhauer does the opposite in his praise of the immaterial significance of music, and of the way in which it is so 'entirely and deeply understood' in the 'inmost consciousness' (Schopenhauer, 1909, p. 334). Stone-Davis (2011) contains a thorough survey of Kant's evaluation of music, which she finds redeemable only if taken as an epistemological curiosity. It is described as a blot in an otherwise refined account of art, written by someone who probably did not much like music.

We have commenced this chapter by reflecting on the expressive significance of a ‘concrete’ work of music, quickly leading to questions about its most intangible, most affective qualities. These questions remain to be answered. What is it that has moved the listener to such an intense degree, and by what means has it done so? Why does the music feel ‘pure and sincere, honest and good’? Indeed, whether *Poetic Knowledge* is ‘extremely conceptual’ (Heath, 1954, p. 587), *supra-conceptual*, or *non-conceptual*, or a discrete understanding of concept that is simply beyond the strict letter or literal interpretation of St. Thomas,<sup>271</sup> must surely be addressed. Also the matter of how to approach a work that is entirely born of ‘a concept’ (as in ‘conceptual art’) probably needs addressing. But one thing appears certain at this juncture. Aesthetic experience, and especially those rarefied, special moments of affective satisfaction in the presence of a beautiful work, really point to one very general truth. ‘It is,’ states Philip Phenix, ‘in the perception of the singular work of art, and not in the conceptual classes to which the abstractive intellect may assign it, that its esthetic meaning consists’ (Phenix, 1964, p. 151). And this, broadly, is the epistemological premise of Maritain’s magisterial *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*.

## II – The shape and scope of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*

Hudson (1987) summarises further aspects of the work’s overall premise and its character. Maritain’s text, he states, ‘marks the decisive and final step in the development of his aesthetics.’ It remains always a ‘theologically-based, analogical description of aesthetic terms’ behind which ‘the notion of subjectivity provides the metaphysical backdrop ... It is the culmination of Maritain’s attempt to liberate artistic intelligence and to preserve artistic freedom’ (Hudson, 1987, p. 250). The text explores the actual genesis of the creative act: it ‘centres on the creative intuition out of which the artefact emerges’ (McInerny, 1988, p. xii).

Confronting such a vast work requires organisation. It will be helpful to divide the weighty chapters of *Creative Intuition* into three larger parts, this being a division in thematic content and also in noticeable stages of progression towards greater degrees of abstraction.<sup>272</sup> The first two chapters are quite introductory. It is also through the latter chapters—about the last third of the text—that Maritain employs musical allusions, descriptions and language with increasing frequency. This lends credence to the assertion that, for whatever reason, he stopped just short of a ‘special, separate’ work on music. As we navigate the text, three eventual musical

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<sup>271</sup> That is, a semantic, extra-textual, understanding of *the concept* or of Aquinas’s construal of concept.

<sup>272</sup> To divide the work this way is, admittedly, somewhat artificial, and it must be stressed that this grouping is not indicated by Maritain, but rather is an attempt at hermeneutic conciseness.

aims are (1) to extend Maritain's general observations, or those concerning another art, into the musical domain in a speculative manner; (2) to draw together and interpret the specific musical references which do appear; and (3) to illustrate some of the precepts of a Maritainian account of music by way of musical examples. In the latter aim, it seems wholly fitting to utilise the very means of reflection employed by Maritain (mostly as pertains to poetry<sup>273</sup>), and our opening musical reflection is written in this spirit.

### *A Fundamental Definition of Poetry*

The first major part of *Creative Intuition* is relatively uncontroversial. It encompasses the chapters *Poetry, man and Things* (pp. 3-43), *Art as a Virtue of the Practical Intellect* (pp. 44-70), and *The Preconscious Life of the Intellect* (pp. 71-105). Art and poetry, beauty and reason are the central themes, and Maritain sets a tone that is expansive and experiential, even as he is providing an epistemological background that is overtly Classical. His primary definitions of art and poetry and of the indissoluble relationship between the two amply illustrate this. Art is defined as 'the creative or producing, work-making activity of the human mind,' and *Poetry*, 'not the particular art which consists in writing verses, but a process both more general and more primary: that intercommunication between the inner being of things and the inner being of the human Self which is a kind of divination ... Poetry, in this sense, is the secret life of each and all of the arts; another name for what Plato called *mousikè*' (Maritain, 1953, p. 3). Importantly, the term *Poetry* is allocated a distinct meaning that is set apart from any particular art or artistic object—yet it speaks of a hidden, divinatory, 'generative energy' behind every artistic act.<sup>274</sup>

This question of vocabulary and meaning is significant because it reminds us that there exists a level of 'incompatibility between the ancient conception of music and our contemporary

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<sup>273</sup> Maritain's specific comment about his use of poetry and painting (Maritain, 1953, p. 4) makes clear that the other arts are just as apposite for philosophical inquiry.

<sup>274</sup> Maritain's use of the term *Poetry* in this 'divinatory sense' sets up an interesting juxtaposition with his frequent usage of the word in the regular, commonplace sense (of writing in verse, or the art of the poet). The degree to which the two are related may also prove to have a significant bearing on 'poetry' in the art of the musician—that is, the relationship between poetry (as 'divination') and meaningfully arranged sounds, because no verbal or material concretion arises. It may be the case that music draws together the two senses, the divinatory and the commonplace, more closely than is found elsewhere. In designating music the highest, most separate and noble art, Schopenhauer, like Maritain, alludes to a hidden, divinatory form of knowledge, as well as noting the collusion between 'the inmost nature of the world and our own self' (Schopenhauer, 1909, p. 334) which characterises music. As we have previously stressed, Schopenhauer's observations are very perceptive, but it is in how he accounts for music's supremacy which causes Maritain to label his ideas as anti-intellectualist divinization. The key difference concerns the role of the intellect, and especially in 'the essential relation beauty has to the intellect.'



understanding of music, which like art, refers to a world apart from the everyday' (Babich, 2005, p. 172). We do describe music entirely differently to our Classical forebears, and have shown, the aesthetics of Christian antiquity also preserved much of that ancient conception, whilst assimilating practical considerations with a twofold, transcendent objective (edification and the worship of God). Perhaps the major epistemological challenge for Maritain, then, is in the way he must negotiate the common<sup>275</sup> and contemporary<sup>276</sup> experiences of art and beauty, whilst remaining faithful to the philosophical and theological heritage of Aquinas and his antecedents, both Christian and Classical.<sup>277</sup>

As regards Maritain's first definitions of poetry and art, and his designating poetry as a sort of divination, we discover in the opening chapters of *Creative Intuition* a deft and subtle handling of this challenge. We are made aware, for instance, of Plato's merits as well as his shortcomings—both of which, though, assist Maritain. Poetry, as Maritain has said, is something akin to *mousikè*<sup>278</sup> (art of the muses), and he is also content to approve the meanings of the general term *Poièsis*, which may variously be construed as an activity which causes being from non-being or the making of works in any kind of art (Maritain, 1953, pp. 88-89). *Poièsis* is not particularised—artists or makers are not called poets, except as concerning that part of the whole *Poièsis* pertaining to music (*mousikè*) or melodic measure, and they are called poets. 'Music, thus, in Plato's vocabulary, does not mean only music, but every artistic genus which depends on the inspiration of the Muse. And he perceived that all the fine arts are the realm of *Mousikè*, and are appendent to poetry...' (Maritain, 1953, p. 89). Maritain appropriates something of the ancient Greek conception—*mousikè*—to give the creative mind real ontological import (Hudson, 1987, p. 251); and it is useful for him to furnish his own characterisation of poetry as 'the secret life of each and all the arts.' We also sense a sympathy for the truism that music in antiquity, with its compounded intellectual-spiritual essence, and

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<sup>275</sup> Sullivan (1964, p. 108) notes this particular challenge for Maritain, stating 'Common experience clearly evidences a need to give extramental expression to moments of sentiment or feeling.'

<sup>276</sup> It is worth recalling that no new form or genre of artistic expression in the early twentieth century escaped Maritain's notice, and in the case of poetry and painting, provoking insightful critique.

<sup>277</sup> It needs mentioning that we also describe music often entirely differently to non-Western cultures today, for example in the ways it is related far more tangibly to movement.

<sup>278</sup> Babich, (2005, pp. 171-175) commences her justification of 'the sense in which one may speak of the music of philosophy' (p. 171) by reminding us that the broadest conception of what we might term 'the practice of music' – called *mousikè technè* – in Classical Antiquity, contains philosophy.

its indivisibility of art, truth, word and language (Babich, 2005, p. 172) cannot be rendered by our modern idea of music.<sup>279</sup>

But Maritain will only go so far in defining the *modus operandi* of poetry along Platonic lines. The ‘divination’ he describes between things and self is only a *kind* of divination, or that it is only analogous to the concept (inspiration) of the muse—which itself is firmly labelled a ‘mania from above’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 82) and a distortion of the real situation that absolute reason and the intuitivity of the intellect are the proper milieu of poetry, even as it emerges in a preconscious state. ‘Platonic dialectics succeeded in dividing’ says Maritain; ‘it was unable to unite’ (p. 88), and transcendental separatism, in his account, is not the basis of poetry, or of knowing in art and music.<sup>280</sup>

So far, we are gaining a picture of a form of knowing—let us now name it *Poetic Knowledge*—in which the necessity of a formed concept is intriguingly questioned (this remains to be substantiated). But it is also a form of knowing wherein the manner and import of the thing being known, such as a profound musical experience, must remain within the purview of the intellect—grounded *in* the person, and not entering ‘muse-like’ from without.<sup>281</sup> Hudson describes this as Maritain ‘placing the Platonic Muse within the human intellect and imagination. Inspiration “from above the soul becomes inspiration from above conceptual reason”’ (Hudson, 1987, p. 251). This is an interesting and complex situation; but as our composers in a previous chapter have intimated, inspiration really is not at all like what it is commonly supposed to be. *Poetry*, now, has a specific meaning to which further discussion of musical beauty must relate.

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<sup>279</sup> One can speculate that Maritain’s reluctance to fully incorporate the art of music into his theory stems from his conceptual unfamiliarity with music, both ancient and modern, and technical unfamiliarity.

<sup>280</sup> Maritain discusses the concept of the Muse in Plato, especially in the *Phaedrus* and the *Ion*. The concept is ‘bound to passion, mania and madness, childlike play, and unconsciousness’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 85) and the poet is construed as one possessed. For Plato, concepts, logic and rational knowledge impede the creation and reception of poetry, because of the delight and beauty which are dependent on inspiration elevated above reason. ‘The myth of the muse signifies that the source of poetry is separate from the human intellect ... in the transcendent eternal fatherland of subsisting Ideas.’ This is compared to ‘the conception of a separate Intellect in the realm of knowledge ... responsible for that detestable idealism which has for so long spoiled the theories of philosophers of beauty’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 87).

<sup>281</sup> But to its credit, as Maritain also points out, ‘Greek reason was able to become aware of that glory of the mind which is knowing and of the authentic relation between the mind and the extra-mental being of things ... It was able to see that the human intellect, in identifying itself immaterially, *intentionaliter*, with the being of things, truly reaches that which exists outside our minds’ (Maritain, 1968, p. 18).

### *Poetic 'Impulse' and the 'Advent' of the Self*

Interpreting Maritain's early reflections<sup>282</sup> on the fundamental entanglement between nature and the human person, between things and self, in aesthetic feeling<sup>283</sup> and in perceiving beauty, we can begin directing some of his comments towards music. Maritain is clear that it is not adequate simply to consider nature and the person or the perception of beauty in theoretic isolation: the real aim must be 'the coming together of the World and the Self—in relation to artistic creation' (Maritain, 1953, p. 10), and in the work made or experienced. From the start of *Creative Intuition*, then, the experience of beauty is construed wholly experientially—from the immediacy of the impact it has on the beholder.

Nature is all the more beautiful as it is laden with emotion. Emotion is essential in the perception of beauty. But what sort of emotion? It is not the emotion which I called a while ago brute or merely subjective. It is another kind of emotion—one with knowledge ... such an emotion transcends mere subjectivity and draws the mind towards things known and toward knowing more (Maritain, 1953, p. 8).

At the exact moment when beauty strikes the apprehender, the experience is characterised as a virtual or latent, meditative complicity between nature and the self, in which no precise idea, image, description or concept arises. It is a matter of 'unexpressed significance, unexpressed meanings more or less unconsciously putting pressure on the mind' (Maritain, 1953, p. 9). Nature, so construed, is therefore a primal constituent of any thing that is 'transfigured' in the work that is contemplated.<sup>284</sup> Put more simply, the experience of beauty cannot exist aside from our experience of the world. It is an emotional reaction to things; and music, of all the arts, surely distils this in very special ways.

By way of comparison, it is pertinent to briefly refer to a well-known alternative account of the musical experience. Susanne Langer's thesis (Langer, 1942, pp. 204-245) investigated the psychological characteristics of the experience of musical beauty, in order to properly distinguish these from theories which either denied emotive significance to a work of music, or conversely, which ascribed precise conceptual meanings to actual sounds. Langer's

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<sup>282</sup> In the section pp. 5-34 of the first chapter.

<sup>283</sup> Maritain surprisingly employs the word 'aesthetic,' notwithstanding his reservations about the semantic limitations and casual use of the term, as well as its singular association with enlightenment theories. The footnote to Trapani (2011, p. 53) summarises this well.

<sup>284</sup> McLaughlin (1982) and Conley (2012) question the extent to which Maritain upholds an Aristotelian conception of art as imitating nature, concluding that it is only in the basic sense in which the formal condition of the creation of works begins by observation, including that of nature. All further mimetic implications are seen by Maritain as a denial of 'the spiritual nature of the act of artistic creation and the spiritual nature of the idea made manifest through an artwork's material signs' (Conley, 2012, p. 242).

argument, which Kivy (2017, p. 434) claims as possibly the most persuasive effort since Schopenhauer, situated the essence of music firmly in its emotive character, reflecting, as she coined it, ‘the morphology of feelings’ (Langer, 1942, p. 238). Furthermore, Langer saw in music ‘what most aestheticians failed to see – its intellectual value, its close relation to concepts, not by reason of its difficult academic “laws,” but in virtue of its *revelations*.’ She continues, ‘If it reveals the rationale of feelings, the rhythm and pattern of their rise and decline and intertwining, to our minds, then it is a force in our mental life, our awareness and understanding, and not only our affective experience’ (Langer, 1942, pp. 238-239). In connecting music and emotion, under theegis of the intellect, there is much here in common with Maritain.<sup>285</sup>

Indeed, Maritain ostensibly addresses the exact same difficulties concerning emotion. For him, the expressive character and structure of the work is apprehended intentionally through *emotion-as-form*. This rings true with the observations of our composers in the previous chapter, although it was never suggested that such affective knowledge was completely without concept. Langer’s ‘structural forms of feeling’ account of musical experience certainly bears comparison to Maritain’s general notion of poetic knowledge, construed as:

... not *depicted* emotion, which is a sort of material element in the work, nor is it the artist’s own emotion *expressed* by a work ... In poetic knowing one divines the inner meaning of things, the “secrets” of being by a “suffering” or being affected by the things of the world: and it is emotion which is the bearer of that which is suffered into the mind of the artist. Hence the emotion is a *cause* of knowledge rather than a *result* of knowledge (Hanke, 1973, pp. 75-76).<sup>286</sup>

However, as Kivy correctly observes, Langer’s theory is deficient because it ‘gave us no clue as to how this alleged connection can account for ... the artistic charm, the artistic power, the artistic significance of music’ (Kivy, 2017, p. 435). In Langer, the *poetic* impulse which is the ‘secret life’ of the art of music (as Maritain would have it) is missing. What Kivy does not observe<sup>287</sup> is the obvious fact that together with Schopenhauer, Langer’s theory is transcendently deficient in its premise<sup>288</sup> and orientation. It concludes that the emotional

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<sup>285</sup> It is surprising that Maritain and Langer, who were almost contemporaries and teaching in the USA at the same time, neither met, nor, to the present author’s knowledge, ever discussed each other’s work.

<sup>286</sup> Before Trapani (2011), Hanke (1973) was the only published monograph on Maritain’s aesthetics.

<sup>287</sup> Kivy is candid about his inability to do so, on account of his own rejection of a Classically-grounded philosophy of music.

<sup>288</sup> Langer’s chapter *On Significance in Music* (Langer, 1942, pp. 204-245) starts by asserting that the problem of explaining music’s affective power ‘is a *logical problem of art*’ (p. 218), albeit in ‘*an artistic, not a positivistic context and purpose*’ (p. 219). This, in itself, feels inadequate, for as Kerr (2000, p. 106) states, ‘In the aesthetic experience, we are given a reality more real than in its logically interpreted appearances.’

significance of music lies in an implicit, self-referential symbolism, in which symbolic forms are ‘regularly confused with the things they symbolise,’ as myths which are believed and sacraments which are ‘taken as efficacious acts’ (Langer, 1942, p. 245). The language speaks for itself—transcendental things are denied the name of knowledge.<sup>289</sup>

This brief detour draws attention to maybe the most significant statement of Maritain’s early chapters—one which confirms his philosophy of art as containing an authentic *theological aesthetic* within a tradition-constituted line of inquiry. In Maritain’s particular assertion he confirms once and for all the essential separation of that aesthetic from both Platonic and post-enlightenment notions. It is precipitated by an event.

Western art passed from a sense of the human Self first grasped as object, and in the sacred exemplar of Christ’s divine Self, to a sense of the human Self finally grasped as subject, or in the creative subjectivity of man himself, man the artist or the poet (Maritain, pp. 21-22).

The advent of the Self—the awakening of the internal person, starts, paradoxically, with the Advent of Christ: the divine assuming human nature. The progressive awakening of the creative subjectivity of the artist, which is defined as ‘a disclosure and manifestation of the human self,’ and through which poetic perception ‘catches and manifests the inner side of things’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 19), begins at the Incarnation. Of course, the doctrine is implicit throughout Maritain’s work: as a Thomist this is understood. But to link the development of artistic self-awareness in the West, so categorically to a single historical occasion of doctrinal magnitude, is very striking. This fundamental connection draws a direct line between Maritain and the Patristic Saints who wrestled with emotion and affection in music; with Aquinas who takes the figure of Christ to be the apex of transcendental beauty and the primary analogate of aesthetic beauty (Ivanov, 2015, p. 587); and with any theologian or philosopher (Von Balthasar<sup>290</sup> and Chesterton<sup>291</sup> for instance) who locate the Incarnation as a turning point in the imaginative, work-making ‘impulse’ of the human person.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> To paraphrase William James’s observation about Kant’s epistemology. (James, 1952, pp. 54-55).

<sup>290</sup> Murphy (1995, pp. 47-48) compares Maritain and Hans Urs Von Balthasar, particularly stressing the latter’s emphasis on ‘experiential contact with reality, being touched by things and responding to them’ synchronously

<sup>291</sup> *The Everlasting Man* (Chesterton, 2007, p. 163) is a case in point.

<sup>292</sup> Without explicitly doing so, Maritain’s aside that art easily turns to idolatry ‘as long as God has not assumed flesh, and the invisible made itself visible’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 11) strongly evokes the *Apologia* of St. John of Damascus in defence of holy images.

### *The ‘Phases’ of Musical Self-Awareness*<sup>293</sup>

Maritain proposes four historical ‘phases’ (Maritain, 1953, pp. 22-29) in the evolution from object to subject in poetic apprehension. Unsurprisingly, he furnishes these with examples drawn from painting—the trajectory is straightforward to visualise. Our (more difficult) task is to convert his view into an account of the genesis of musical self-awareness. This attempt will be conveyed in simple, fairly non-specialist interpretive terms.

[1] The immense reality of the human soul is more and more present, but not revealed, even in the manner of an object; it remains veiled behind the intellectual and universal, dogmatic significance of sacred symbols and figures. The divinity of Christ soars over everything (Maritain, 1953, p. 22).

We have previously shown that the Patristic Fathers of West and East understood music to possess astonishing affective strength, able to induce intense emotive reactions. The Fathers’ concern about music’s correct usage personified the new, Christian internal person, struggling with that ‘immense reality’ of their soul, but painfully aware of the sacred paradigm of Christ. Consequently they tried to emphatically formulate the precepts and practices of the sounds of a new musical liturgy. Unlike Byzantine painting, no record of those actual sounds is left to us, except as they eventually cohered into the identifiable monodic (single vocal part) chants of the Church.<sup>294</sup> In Gregorian melody this musical formulation attained canonically regulated status, becoming a universal and univocal musical expression—a ‘closed repertory of melodies’ (Page, 2010, p. 564) and most assuredly a fixed set of sacred musical ‘symbols and figures.’<sup>295</sup> On a theological level, this musical phase passed into the next somewhat naturally and smoothly.

[2] The mystery of the Person still comes into sight as a mere object, in the world of Things though transcending things ... this mystery discloses its more human depths ... Art is still dominated by sacred inspiration, and Christ is still at the center. But this time it is Christ in His humanity ... the human soul

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<sup>293</sup> Martini’s 1959 thesis notes Maritain’s four historical phases of artistic self-awareness, but offers no specific commentary on composers or works in the first two phases or the fourth (See Martini, 1959, pp. 80-96). He does offer, though, some valuable comparisons between Maritain’s third phase and the age of romanticism.

<sup>294</sup> For example Roman, Beneventan, Milanese, Hispanic and Gallican as distinct regional chant forms which were absorbed into the Gregorian form. Page (2010) is an outstanding cultural-historical survey of this ‘phase.’

<sup>295</sup> From several references, it appears Maritain especially revered Gregorian chant. (Maritain, 1962, p. 57, pp. 68-69). Scholarship has overlooked the possible reasons, but there is evidence that early experiences after his conversion (alongside Raïssa Maritain) to the Catholic Church were a contributory factor. The Maritains’ visit to the monastery of the Solesmes Benedictines on the Isle of Wight in 1907 is documented by a recent archivist Dom Patrick Hala (2011, pp. 219-238) and is recorded nowhere else other than a biographical date in McInerney (2003, p. 42). Better documented is the period spent at Saint Paul’s Benedictine Abbey of Oosterhout in preparation to become semireligious oblates. (Bush, 1987, p. 60., McInerney, 2003., and Raïssa’s own record in Maritain, R. 2016, p. 327).

gleams everywhere through the barred windows of the objective world ... self is more and more present on the stage, in the manner of an object which art offers to our sight (Maritain, 1953, p. 22).

Maritain's description, above, could easily typify the creation of polyphony in the Mediaeval era, or its evolution from sacred unison melody. The Gregorian melodies, once 'purely spiritual, transcendental expressions of art, become now the foundation upon which the genius of northwestern Europe was to build a new musical world' (Lang, 1983, p. 130). The seemingly innocuous act of adding just one part at the interval of a fourth or fifth represents a profoundly human creative intervention in the sacred order, and by this act, the sacred object is now effectively presented not just horizontally in sound, but vertically as a compound. Increasing complexity and an enlarged range of expressive traits characterised, for instance, the Notre Dame school of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, of whom Léonin (1135-1201) and Pérotin (1160-1230) were esteemed.<sup>296</sup> The latter being responsible for two, three and sometimes four voice *organa*—a development wherein one or more parts overlay the Gregorian melody 'with an abundance of striking musical embellishments' (Anonymous 4 in Roesner, 2001). Such elaborations caused both admiration and distaste in response to the sounds and techniques of singer and composer,<sup>297</sup> but as Ficker (1921, p. 485) notes, the composer as a distinct creator of 'artistically wrought polyphonic compositions' definitely emerges, although still guided by sacred stimuli. Figures such as Guillaume de Machaut (c.1300-1377)<sup>298</sup> in Rheims or, very much earlier, Peter Abelard (c.1079-1142) exemplify the sort of poetic, creative-subjective awakening which Maritain coins the artist's 'newly discovered autonomy' (Maritain, 1953, p. 23)—in Abelard's case, in extremis.<sup>299</sup> Along these lines we witness the human person (artist and perceiver, but especially artist) growing in experiential consciousness via the artistic object 'offered' to the ears.<sup>300</sup> However, a distinct faultline is soon to appear.

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<sup>296</sup> Although starkly different to Maritain's 'high view' of the Mediaeval age, Bruce Holsinger's revisionist and rather 'salacious' account of stylistic revolutions in the Notre Dame period effectively captures its profoundly human dimension. (See Holsinger, 2001, pp. 137-190).

<sup>297</sup> John Salisbury (1120-1180), Bishop of Chartres expressed both approval and aversion in his well-known polemic (see Hayburn, 1979. P.18).

<sup>298</sup> A poet and composer of secular and sacred vocal music, Machaut wrote the earliest known and surviving complete setting of the Ordinary of the Mass.

<sup>299</sup> Applying Maritain's point that 'creative subjectivity cannot awaken to itself except in communing with Things' (Maritain, 1953, p. 29), Abelard's fearsome logical, poetic and musical skills could be taken as exhibiting an especially controversial rupture with the contemporaneous 'objective phase' in the 'advent' of the person. Pope Benedict XVI (2009) comments on Abelard's Christological weakness (contrasted to St. Bernard's doctrinal strength); but this situation may also be construed as an excess of the self, becoming 'more and more present on the stage' (Maritain, 1953, p. 22), which renders Abelard rather an artistic precursor.

<sup>300</sup> Ficker (1921, pp. 484-485) also notes that 'the entire governmental, religious and social life of those times, far more than today, was literally penetrated with music.' Maybe this is an observation Maritain was in no position to make, for as Ficker confirms, even musicology of the early twentieth century (unlike studies in

[3] The sacral order of old Christendom dissolves (Maritain, 1953, p. 22) ... And the artist, it is true, no longer looks at [nature] to draw from her symbols of supernatural realities, as the Middle Ages did, he no longer believes ... that good painting is nothing but a copy of the perfections of God and a recollection of His painting ... It is a music and a melody which only the intellect can understand, and that with great difficulty... The work bears more openly than ever ... the imprint of its maker (Maritain, 1953, pp. 24-25).

In trying to identify the next phase of musical self-awareness (which loosely parallels Renaissance, Baroque and Classical art) we are more challenged still. It is not so straightforward an application but it is noteworthy that Maritain adopts a musical analogy to describe a new epoch of human autonomy. The phase is characterised by an ‘outburst of individualism,’ in which ‘the sense of the human self and of human subjectivity enters a process of internalization, and passes from the *object* depicted to the *mode* with which the artist performs his work’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 23). Now, the artist’s personality exerts an unconscious weight upon the object of their attention, whether natural or sacred things, and it comes to ‘exercise and manifest itself freely in the work’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 23). The key to providing a hermeneutic for the ascent of human subjectivity through such a vast period lies in the way Maritain sees the phase as an inexorable, enduring progression towards the modern era, as well as one more complex and less stable than the previous.

Broadly, the phase corresponds with the advent of the Western tonal system and a sizable part of the common practice period,<sup>301</sup> as well as the polyphonic advances of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries prior. The composer is now definitively ‘a composer,’ the maker of a work of music into which pass idiosyncratic artistic and poetic traits, and which imprints those traits onto the performer or listener. “That is such and such a composer,” we say; and that is why we say it—it is inherent to our musical experience. The object is now apprehended solely through the subject represented and the mode of its representation; and onto it the composer has stamped ‘the mark of his own individuality, of his own style, even if it is true that he aspires to

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the plastic arts) had only just begun to grasp the creative extent of music in late Mediaeval times. But the spirit of the age is clear—an age venerated by Maritain. The following is apt. ‘And so, with the liturgical melody as cantus firmus supplying the firm foundation for the polyphonic composition, there was formed in the hearer’s mind, together with the musical sense-impression, a contemplatively religious conception. This music, in consequence, was lifted far above the realm of subjective emotionality into the sphere of an impersonal transcendentalism, affecting each individual believer. The personal inspiration of the artist becomes, by virtue of the spiritual power of the cantus firmus, the collective inspiration of the great Christian congregation; the artist himself is merely the ideal craftsman who moulds the ore entrusted to him into artistic form’ (Ficker, 1921, p. 488).

<sup>301</sup> Usually given as c. 1650-1900.



achieving “style” rather than to “having a style” (Maritain, 1953, p. 25) as we tend now to think. This gravitation towards the internal creative impulse is the vital background to Maritain’s comment regarding music and melody being understood only intellectually. Lang (1963, pp. 292-296) notes that the complex ‘simultaneity’ of sound which epitomised, for instance, the era of Palestrina (1525-1594) and his contemporaries, saw a proliferation of theoretical discussions and treatises which discarded the speculative and symbolic Pythagorean-Boethian musical systems of the Mediaeval era. Is there a pre-eminent example whose music (and related aesthetic ‘doctrine’) encapsulates all these descriptions and this phase? In Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) there is surely a noteworthy irruption of individualism.

John Eliot Gardiner describes how Monteverdi’s madrigals and operas engage audiences over four centuries after they were written because of their matchless emotive range. In stark contrast to the composers of the Mediaeval age whose works ‘reflect the heavens and the divine godhead ... Monteverdi is much more centered on the human being’s place in the world: what he or she thinks about life ...’ (Gardiner, cited in Schmid, 2017, p. 27). And to this more personal end, Monteverdi gave the Western musical canon its most innovative, tonal and performative developments yet.

Formal constraints, both textual and musical, yielded to affect. Monteverdi characteristically stretched or abandoned musical rules – of counterpoint, voice-leading, dissonance – in response to poetic considerations. But those considerations involved the meaning of words rather than the form of the poetry (Rosand, 1989, p. 114).

Chew (2001, 5) notices that modern scholarship resists anachronistically labelling Monteverdi as the pivotal figure in the transition from modal to full tonal harmony—he is far more complex and ambiguous. And in the case of the *Vespers of 1610*, Wainwright (2012) considers that performing the work requires comprehension of a bewildering synthesis of artistic, religious and interpretive contexts—there actually being no single way of performing the music. The individualistic trends which Maritain identifies in his ‘third phase’ can readily be assigned to Monteverdi, and they certainly bear his imprint.

External forms are not to be copied, but to be interpreted ... caught and carried along in the freedom of imagination fecundated by nature ... An external manifestation of this fact is the multiplicity of contrasting schools and techniques ... Even the individual factor in the mode of performing the work becomes so powerful that the greatest artists cannot actually understand each other’s art (Maritain, 1953, pp. 23-24, 25).

There is, though, a weakness in Maritain's argument. By severing so fully the present (third) phase from the previous two, he errs in two respects. First, by not clarifying that one broad period does not simply commence as a previous era ceases. There is, of necessity, a process of development in which artistic tradition is partly formed from what came prior to it, and in which the seeds of future development are contained in the present forms.<sup>302</sup> Even the most radical departure from previous forms will be marked by the very aesthetic dissimilarity it represents. Admittedly, Maritain is neither historian nor musicologist (Newton-Smith, 1971, p. 144), but in affording it a somewhat different trajectory, he separates his psychological hermeneutic from a more historically-sensitive reading, whereas greater conformity would be advantageous. Pattison (1998, p. 34) is quick to point out that for Maritain, 'mediaeval culture was significantly superior to the secular, humanist civilization of the modern world,' which may, in part, explain the rupture.<sup>303</sup>

The second flaw in Maritain's argument lies in his dogmatic assertion that transcendental awareness and the ordering of art towards the perfection of God had vanished from the creative act. This is simply not the case, and countless composers demonstrate why. Monteverdi epitomises the porous boundary between sacred and secular music—the composer of the *Vespers* was the composer of *L'Orfeo*, the first opera as we know it. As Schmid (2017, p. 27) states, 'Monteverdi had already created an unprecedented synthesis between words and music. And his progressive style spilled over into church music.' The reality is that a more internal, subjective and humanised mode of artistry is not, and never could be, exclusive to secular music. Sacred inspiration still frequently governs the working mind of the composer and the

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<sup>302</sup> Monteverdi's own defence of the distinction between a *prima pratica* and a *seconda pratica* in his style, has proved a useful but crude yardstick for determining the theoretical and aesthetic difference between retrospective elements (the influence of Palestrina) and an evolved 'freer, more rhetorically expressive concertato style of the north Italian composers' (Chew, 2001). But as Chew immediately notes, 'the powerful narrative unity (or duality) it confers on Monteverdi's development as a composer is largely fictitious.' Maritain might, at this point have sagely remarked that "there is nothing new under the sun." The case of the *Missa in illo tempore*—a 'parody mass' based upon material from an older work by Gombert (1495-1560)—provides an interesting contrast. Published with the *Vespers* in 1610, it is regarded by some as a skilful, yet archaic and excessively 'overworked' manipulation of the motifs and conventions of its source material. Kurtzman (1978, pp. 47-68) follows this view, citing a range of scholarship in mid-twentieth century analysis. Performance oriented studies may well hold a different opinion.

<sup>303</sup> In depicting Maritain's view of the Renaissance as a 'fateful apostasy which would eventually ruin art by giving the artist a false self-consciousness and an overweening hubris,' Pattison (1998, p. 34) exaggerates Maritain's position, but there is some truth to it. However, Pattison's conclusion that Maritain's 'heteronomy of faith over art' (Pattison, 1998, p. 53) renders a Thomistic account of art unrealistic, is insupportable, both in light of the subjective orientation of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, and in the distinctions Maritain always preserves between the virtues of art and the theological or moral virtues.

mode of a work's presentation. Less than a century later, J.S Bach (to whom Maritain significantly alludes) affirms this view; but we will return to Bach later.<sup>304</sup>

The critical points above raise questions about musical tendencies looking to the past, in style, religious inspiration and as a source of creativity. It is as difficult to characterise this trait as inhering to any musical era or subjective phase as it is to explain the trait itself. For some composers, the adoption of retrospective techniques is very significant to their creative process, and this may be particularly acute in sacred music, but accounting for this as a creative, affective phenomenon is key to the present discussion. Maritain's stance is important here, and it puts the matter into perspective. For him, 'art does not "imitate" forms in the sense of reproducing shapes; that would condemn art to repetition of the past.' It would be inauthentic and un-Thomistic. 'Rather, one might even say that eternal forms are the precondition for the very possibility of inexhaustible novelty (Schloesser, 2000, p. 188). Continuity is a Thomistic 'hallmark' or '*signa*' (Vijgen, 2018), in that innovation and development emerge from within tradition, not autonomously. Whilst this precept concerns the essence and unity of Thomism, the emotive and poetic consciousness of the composer—the maker of the work—is not immune from this principle. In fact, for Maritain in *Creative Intuition* as well as in *Art and Scholasticism*, a longitudinal view of poetry is clearly vital (which is why he began with Plato) and this might have provided a better degree of synthesis between phases.

Alighting briefly on Monteverdi has drawn us back to music and the emotions. Rosand, (1989, p. 137) puts it aptly: 'Rather than reaffirming the common bond between music and text as but 'two aspects of a single syntax of human emotion, Monteverdi's late works assert the power of music to mean on its own: not to imitate words but to represent emotion.' This captures Maritain's portrayal of a third phase in the advent of the subjective-artistic self. And when Maritain alludes to 'a melody which only the intellect can understand' (Maritain, 1953, p. 24), he is not entertaining any dualistic notions of mind. On the contrary; the affective, emotive life is fundamentally hidden within the life of the intellect, emerging to represent and give meaning and expression. Noting that for Maritain, this sort of interpretive role also inheres to beauty, Kerr (2000, p. 112) states that the artist 'shows us reality in reverse, not in its positive material dimension, but in its negative imprint left on the heart by some reality through emotion and

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<sup>304</sup> Our twofold critique may be too severe, as Maritain could simply be stressing an especially important difference between the second and third phases—that the largely 'anonymous' artisan of the Mediaeval age had given way to the subjectively-aware artist that we identify in the modern sense. As it pertains to music, though, the theological critique is probably stronger.

feeling.’ In the musical experience, this rings true—perhaps it is what Langer attempted to articulate as ‘the unspeakable’ (Langer, 1942, p. 235). These pillars of Maritain’s thought will become ever more vital as we enter his fourth historical phase of poetic apprehension, and beyond.

[4] In this phase, the process of internalization through which human consciousness has passed from the concept of the Person to the very experience of subjectivity comes to fulfilment: it reaches the creative act itself. Now subjectivity is revealed, I mean as creative ... The inner meaning of Things are enigmatically grasped through the artist’s Self and both are manifested in the work together. This was the time when poetry became conscious of itself (Maritain, 1953, pp. 27-28).

It is no exaggeration that from this juncture, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* acquires its entire *raison d’être*. Almost as a prelude, Maritain has observed the rise of the poetic or creative impulse from Christian antiquity to some point in the early nineteenth century—of itself an original and synoptic approach quite distinct from historical, discipline-specific inquiry. But now his entire focus, and the real point of the text, is upon ‘the modern,’ and now there is a confidence and authority to Maritain’s observations. We must elaborate before finding a preliminary musical analogue.

Once again the relationship of object to subject comes under scrutiny—the essential association between nature and the person, things and self. (Maritain never eschews fundamental Aristotelian-Thomistic foundations<sup>305</sup>). In this phase Maritain proposes that subjectivity has become *the* means of entering and interpreting the objective world, and that creative subjectivity—the poetic impulse—‘cannot awaken to itself except in communing with Things’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 29). There is persuasive logic to the claim that what is sought in nature must correspond deeply to the self of the artist—it is an ideal condition which expresses truth in just such an adequation or conformity of things and self, and a highly Thomistic explanation. In reception also, the characteristic feeling that *a work could be no other way* (which we have already met), must in part proceed from such conformity. The work feels ‘true’ and ‘sincere.’ In the following, it is tempting to replace the word ‘painter’ with ‘musician,’ and then allude to *auditory* things and inner *resonances*.

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<sup>305</sup> ‘Thus the relationship with Nature has been changed, but has not been abolished’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 29). It remains to be seen whether the relationship with sacred or transcendental ‘objects’ has been finally dismantled in the quest to perceive the reality of things through the self, or whether it has likewise been transformed or construed fully subjectively. Investigation in the chapter *A Thomistic Philosophy of Music: Conceivable and Essential* has already pointed to the latter.

Nature, for the painter, is no longer a separate thing-in-itself, but Nature, in some of her inner aspects, has reached the heart of creative subjectivity, as a germ of that object which is the work to be born ... And because subjectivity has become the very vehicle to penetrate into the objective world, what is thus looked for in visible Things must have the same kind of inner depth and inexhaustible potentialities for revelation as the Self of the painter (Maritain, 1953, p. 29).

Almost in passing, Maritain makes two noteworthy observations which have real bearing as we propose a musical equivalent. First, that the kind of poetic *knowing* being described possesses ‘a sort of ontological ‘vastness’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 29) and intellectual pre-eminence which is paradoxical to logical reason. As we have already intimated, even the very notion of *concept* is to be challenged, and that music, by virtue of its own boundless sonorous nature, is well-suited to meet the challenge.<sup>306</sup> Second, it follows from this that the approach of each artist *must* be uniquely different—not just in technique and how they achieve ‘a style,’ but in a far more ontological way, as they attempt to grasp in themselves the reality of what is meant by things. For this reason, efforts to demarcate a particular tradition or ‘style’ in the modern era of music, especially in the twentieth century, are fraught with difficulty.

Overall, in the fourth phase (distinguished from the third), the object is no longer apprehended *through* the subject represented and the mode of its representation. It has vanished *behind* subjectivity—a good way of characterising stylistic individualism. In music, therefore, when does this phase commence? Should we claim that late Beethoven or Schubert represent the start of Maritain’s fourth phase, as some might presume? These two composers do appear to represent an especially human, personal and subjective dimension in the work-making process.<sup>307</sup> Neither would it be wrong to afford a certain (and previously unheard) immensity of creative scope to Beethoven. Again it is revealing to consult those most experientially familiar with a work. Describing his experience of singing Schubert’s *Winterreise* song cycle, tenor Ian Bostridge<sup>308</sup> leans towards an expurgated notion of the object, and he well-nigh attributes affective intentionality to the process—the very sense of *becoming* the work through identification.

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<sup>306</sup> Schopenhauer notices the ‘ontological vastness’ of musical apprehension, for it is this quality that caught his attention in the first place, forcing him to classify music over and above, and separate to all other arts. However, the vastness he describes, which is ‘entirely independent of the phenomenal world,’ is rather the ontological depth of the whole human will, of which ‘music is as direct an objectification and copy’ as the ‘world itself’ (Schopenhauer, 1909, p. 336). In eschewing nature and divinising the will, Schopenhauer could not be more contrasted to Maritain.

<sup>307</sup> Traditional musicological views hold that Beethoven’s mature works, with Schubert, prefigure many developments in nineteenth century romanticism, whilst remaining essentially bound to Classical era forms.

<sup>308</sup> A view formed after more than one hundred professional performances of the complete cycle.

The discipline of classical music – the score and its demands – creates an objective space in which the dangers of self-indulgence can be held at bay ... At the same time, this can only be achieved, paradoxically, through utter immersion in the work and a merging between the composer's work and the performer's personality. Erasure in the music and the projection of subjectivity through it. Sublimation ... The performer has to access and transform private aspects of his or her own self (just as, I would argue, the composer does) (Bostridge 2015, 487–88).<sup>309</sup>

On the other hand, conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt is more reserved. He describes Schubert's two late Masses in A flat and E flat major, alongside Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, in terms conforming far more closely to Maritain's third phase (with sacred inspiration reinstated), or even to the second. These works manifestly bear the creative, subjective imprints of each composer – that is, their personalities and experiences unconsciously yet forcefully shape the object of their attention (in this case, the *Solemn Mass*), manifested in expressive and emotional ways. The works are, he states:

[The] greatest, most important and artistically significant attempts to come to terms with the Christian liturgy. I believe that the social situation and audiences' mental outlook, together with the whole way in which religion and life are bound up with each other in Central Europe, means that, for listeners and musicians alike, these works have an expressive force that is quite literally capable of stirring us to the very depths of our souls. I do not think that at church is the right place for us to attempt to confront their underlying meaning (Harnoncourt, 1997).<sup>310</sup>

Whether looking back or forwards, the phases seem better construed if taken less as contained epochs, and more as a continuous artistic 'advent' revealed in distinguishable stages, with fluid creative exchanges between the sacred and the secular. Beethoven's late fascination with fugal forms (retrospection) for instance, or Haydn's late masses (innovation), illustrate the point. Reaching further back—maybe somewhere between the first and second phases—there are, also, distinctive outbursts of emotive and affect-laden melody, which makes us ask whether chant was quite so untouchable and objective in the first place.<sup>311</sup> In this light, the later set

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<sup>309</sup> Sullivan reminds us that Maritain's construal of subjectivity as a 'primary requirement' of poetic knowledge is 'inseparable from a secondary requirement: the grasping of things other than the self ... Further, the experience of the self as the principal aspect of poetic knowledge ... is of the self as affected or modified in the manner of emotion ... *the affectively modified self as that aspect of the conscious experience which prevails*' (Sullivan, 1964, p. 49). Bostridge expresses this less philosophically, but authoritatively.

<sup>310</sup> Scholars have debated why Schubert omitted part of the text of the *Credo* in both masses, rendering them inadmissible in the liturgical context and 'a deviation' from orthodoxy. John Gingerich, though, interprets this more as a question of agency and intentionality, concluding that Schubert deeply 'cared about both the meaning of his text and its form, but form, textual and musical, quite literally followed meaning. Schubert has always been known first and foremost as a composer of lieder' (Gingerich, p. 95).

<sup>311</sup> In her study of Old Hispanic chant and the documents of Isidore of Seville (c. 570–636), Emma Hornby identifies emotive development well beyond 'Augustine's ethical priority of rational worship.' In the Iberian tradition, 'elaborate devotional melody [leads] the faithful and unfaithful alike toward a transcendent

formulations of Gregorian melody could even be cast as *affectively* retrograde. In reaching only for applications in the plastic and literary arts, Maritain has perhaps missed opportunities to provide such richly diverse and connected analogues. Sometimes it is hard (and unwarranted) to distinguish things quite so absolutely.

Generally speaking, whilst Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* or Schubert's late masses and the *Winterreise* each display uniquely 'subjective' elements and approaches, we do not find in these composers the sort of full objective dissolution which Maritain clearly identifies with modern poetic forms and his fourth phase.<sup>312</sup> If it were otherwise, we should expect to see works fully liberated from prior forms—no longer sonatas, symphonies or concertos in a defined classical sense. At a conceptual level too, from the point at which music attains expression in sound, as composed and experienced—that point when 'the creative impulse enters the sphere of authority of conceptual reason, and conceptual reason claims its rights to sovereignty' (Maritain, 1953, pp. 310-311), these two composers can signify only our third phase. Tied to bound forms, rational connections, and moderately explicit meanings or emotive import, Beethoven and Schubert are closer to their antecedents than their heirs. In respect of their religious music too, it would be deeply erroneous to suggest that sacred inspiration no longer ruled the working mind and presentational mode of their works; although the musical object is now very deeply humanised.<sup>313</sup>

After this exercise in negation, we must positively identify a single figure to characterise the beginning of Maritain's fourth phase. Who is the musical analogue of Baudelaire or Cézanne?<sup>314</sup> Martini (1959, p. 87) makes the germane point that in finding an application, we

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anticipation of heaven, beyond a reasoned concentration on liturgical text' (Hornby, 2016, p. 631). Emotion, effectively sufficed. Similarly, the melodies of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) are a notable irruption of expressive individuality across both sacred and secular spheres.

<sup>312</sup> Hints of complete objective dissolution and subjective departure from classically bound forms may well be sensed in the late string quartets of Beethoven, which of itself, shows that future developments will, by necessity, be contained in present forms, however obscurely. Maynard Solomon notes that Beethoven was also contemporaneously measured against an implicitly classical artistic rule, with many composers, critics, authors and philosophers complaining of incomprehensibility, infringement of compositional precepts, and a basic 'subordination of beauty' (Solomon, pp. 35-36). Maritain, though, identifies such elevated individuality, in which even 'the greatest artists cannot actually understand each other's art' (Maritain, 1953, pp. 23-24, 25), as typifying only his third phase of development.

<sup>313</sup> In reflecting on the depth of humanity in Beethoven's works (and lack of grace), Maritain opines, 'how resist this great heart that gives itself, spirit and soul confounded, and which supplements a certain ungratefulness of the workman's invention by the generosity of his personal substance dispensed without measure?' (Maritain, 1953, p. 402). And regarding the poetic and emotive intensity in Schubert: "'What I produce is due to my understanding of music and to my sorrows,'" Schubert said' (Maritain, 1953 p. 251).

<sup>314</sup> For Maritain, the two pivotal figures of poetry and painting are clearly Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) and Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), and these represent the beginning of the fourth phase, that of modern poetry. For us, interpreting the fourth phase—that of the fully subjective composer—Cocteau's axiom so beloved by

must extricate our essentially philosophical inquiry from musicological categories. It would be facile, for example, to assume that classicism appeals only to reason, whilst romanticism appeals only to emotion. In *Creative Intuition* Maritain is less concerned with historic periods per se—he is foremost a philosopher probing the genesis of creativity (Maritain, 1953, p. 4), and it is always mindful of this that previous and forthcoming musical analogues and applications are offered somewhat cautiously. That being said, in the person and works of Robert Schumann (1810-1856), the *poetic* conditions for Maritain’s ‘modern era’—his fourth phase—are legitimately established.

One could reasonably debate the necessity of converting Maritain’s ‘four phases’ to music, or whether to follow such an obvious canonical pattern. There are two main reasons for doing so. First, had Maritain written that ‘special, separate analysis,’ it is likely that such a survey would be a fairly early component. Later in *Creative Intuition*, when he extends conceptual boundaries to the very limit, wholly on the basis of modern poetry (the fourth phase), the broad historical backdrop will not be so visible or necessary. Second, as we have observed, the kind of poetic knowing to which Maritain alludes—‘one more experience than knowledge’ (Trapani, 2002, p. 185),<sup>315</sup>—is potentially already recognisable within *and* between the particular epochs. Boundaries are vague and not neatly chronological.<sup>316</sup> In describing the phases of musical self-awareness, therefore, a balance has had to be struck between making clear distinctions and acknowledging the evidential problems inherent in doing so. It has been helpful to briefly alight upon individual composers, especially to ground our philosophical inquiry in the broad development of Western art music. It is also to recognise, with Maritain (and Langer for that

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Maritain, ‘TRADITION APPEARS AT EVERY EPOCH UNDER A DIFFERENT DISGUISE,’ (Schloesser, 2000, p. 189) is apposite. It shines a light backwards through each preceding phase, connecting them together in spirit. In this long progression towards an internalisation of the object and the eternal (the theological trajectory of the phases), Maritain’s comments about forms that only the intellect can understand and artists being unable to understand each other are deeply perceptive. The ‘modern’ composer, logically, will inevitably manifest in the work an utterly unique, personalised and expressive, emotive response to nature and to God.

<sup>315</sup> Trapani notes the epistemological originality of Maritain’s project. ‘As opposed to opinion ... strictly or technically speaking, the term knowledge ought to be reserved for conceptual knowledge—those judgements that are either self-evidently true, experimentally true, or “asserted to be certainly or probably true as conclusions of valid inference or correct reasoning”’ (Trapani, 2002, p. 185).

<sup>316</sup> Daverio recognises in Schumann a composer fully aware of the poetic fluidity and flux of various epochs; noting Schumann’s view of the late Beethoven quartets and some of the choruses of Bach as representing ‘the extreme limits of human art and imagination’ (Daverio, 1997, p. 121), but also, a composer intent on setting out a completely original poetic agenda. ‘Schumann aimed at no less than a charting of the expanses of an imaginative universe’ (Daverio, 1997, p. 104). Marston (2007, pp. 48-61) also depicts the way in which Schumann recognised poetic expression in the works of his precursors, utilising this to spur his own originality.



matter), that the actual experience of music—its *emotive* import—engendered in a particular work made by a particular composer, is both informative and authoritative.

### *A First Encounter with Robert Schumann*

Maritain comments that the advent of Western individualism (for which we have just provided a musical snapshot) sees the reverse of ancient art, both Classical and Christian. In its earliest phases, art aimed at revealing only things but incidentally revealed, ‘despite itself, the creative subjectivity of the artist.’ Now, the true modern, at its best, is intent on the artist’s self revealing creative subjectivity, but also unveiling the ‘hidden aspects and meanings’ of things ‘with greater power of penetration’ than ever before. ‘At the root of the creative act there must be a quite particular intellectual process, without parallel in logical reason, through which Things and the Self are grasped together by means of a kind of experience or knowledge which has no conceptual expression and is expressed only in the artist’s work.’ And flowing from this, in a strikingly high view of the person, he declares the profoundly simple truth that we are ‘capable of sensing beauty’ (all Maritain, 1953, pp. 33, 34). In proposing Schumann as a true ‘modern’—as an artist in whose work *poetry* (as the secret life of his music) is manifested—this elevated physiognomy of the self should ring true. We *should* expect to find in Schumann a heightened self-awareness, the human artist transfiguring or completely reforming the objects of nature, and the irruption of native poetic impulse in his works. We should also expect fresh insights into the nature of musical beauty.

Adhering to Maritain’s distinction between classical poetry and modern forms, Schumann palpably embodies the latter most overtly in his piano works. There are numerous examples we could utilise, but the eight pieces of the *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 12 (1837) or the *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15 (1838) supply ready archetypes. We must blend musicological observations into a Maritainian hermeneutic, and try to combine them without descending into overly-technical analysis.<sup>317</sup> Just as ‘the patterning of words in rhyme or meter’ (Williams, 2005, p. 27) is dissolved in modern poetry, so in these works, the perceptual imagination derives completely autonomous ‘relations and proportions in the world of sound’ (Williams, 2005, p. 27) which are not contingent on classical structures in their ‘conceptualisation.’ It is only these relations

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<sup>317</sup> In typically dogmatic style, Scruton (1987, p. 171) also expresses this dilemma. ‘The false sciences and cabalisms of musicology are of no significance; not because they are badly argued, nor because they misrepresent what they describe, but because they describe the wrong thing. They offer to explain how the notes are *in themselves*, and not how they are *in the ear of the listener*.’

and proportions which convey the work's expressive import and character. But now we need detail.

### ***'Warum?' All Questions and No Answers***

If, however, a thought is at hand, then it won't require fancy harmonic attire, which in any case often does more harm than good ... If you have a beautiful thought, don't mangle and waste it until it's common and degraded, as many composers do, and then call this 'development' (Schumann diary entry, in Daverio, 1997, p. 97).

(Ex. 2, in Appendix. 1)

'Warum?' is the third and shortest of the *Fantasiestücke*, and as with the other seven pieces, its title invokes no specific place or purpose, event or person.<sup>318</sup> It is also, perhaps, the most 'poetically' condensed, and bears similarities to the miniatures of *Kinderszenen*.

Melodically, the tiny six-note opening, which resolves upwards from the dominant to the mediant, is utilised ceaselessly in different parts and in more intense ways. Sometimes the melody overlaps, and there is only minimal development—for instance, to transpose the phrase away from the home key, and in three tiny contrapuntal elaborations (descending eighth notes in bars 8, 10 and 12). Neither is the phrase ever 'properly' completed by an answering phrase as might be formally expected<sup>319</sup>—it is rather cut off in the manner of an 'abortive melody,' which is how Maritain defines the term *motif*. (Maritain, 1953, p. 253). In successive restatements, the melodic intervals of this motif—its horizontal relations—are very delicately altered, changing the motif's contour. The alto appearance in bars 5-7 incorporates a dotted rhythm in place of a crotchet (the addition of one semiquaver to the motif), and an extended resolution to the final note with a wistful appoggiatura. In contrast to the expansive rising major 6<sup>th</sup> at the end of the first statement, the final note of the bass motif in bars 19-21 descends by a semitone. More could be said.

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<sup>318</sup> This is not to say the title is unimportant. Tadday (2007, p. 44) points to the aesthetic function of Schumann's titles as being both a departure from the previous age in which titles signalled pure forms (sonata, fugue and so on), and a deliberately ambiguous, open-ended reflection. Here it is also pertinent to briefly mention the oblique 'referential' dimension of the *Fantasiestücke* Op. 12 and many of the other early piano suites, of which the uninitiated listener will have no awareness. Schumann intentionally regarded these works as embodying two sides of his personality—the introvert and the extrovert, and he characterised these in two imaginary figures of his own invention: *Florestan* and *Eusebius*. The former represented the heroic, wild and impulsive; the latter mild, dreamy and reflective. *Warum?* was construed as Eusebius questioning Florestan's unrestrained and passionate nature in the tumultuous second piece, *Aufschwung* (Soaring). Introductions to Schumann's compositional 'doppelganger' are in Sams (1967, pp. 131-134) and Chernaik (2011, pp. 45-55).

<sup>319</sup> This is the type of melodic fragment that, in slightly earlier music, one would expect to be balanced or 'answered' by a consequent phrase.

If it is true (as Scruton has constantly stated) that the relationship of one note to another in melody, not only articulates character, but closely imitates forms of human life, feeling and interaction, then Schumann's tiny, yet restless and unresolved motif must be taken as a gesture which connotes a sense of questioning. The stretto-like entries of the second half, in themselves, convey an almost juvenile impatience, and the way Schumann manipulates the phrase lengths (the vital element of space) contrasts with the relatively unchanging duration of individual note values.

The rhythmic movement of the piece is sustained by a syncopated accompaniment pattern, which, combined with a slow tempo and frequent ties across bars, removes us from the apprehension of regular pulse. The nominal presence of a 2/4 metre only reinforces how far from certainty the music feels; but paradoxically, the basic rhythm of the opening four notes of the melodic motif is never modified or developed. It is simply repeated twenty-two times, almost childishly (with the repeat of the second section, many more than that). Schumann's 'propensity for brief, almost aphoristic musical statements' and 'a love for mystery and concealed meaning' (Tadday, 2007, p. 41) may owe much to literary influences<sup>320</sup> but our focus is on the work made, and on the ways in which its subjective, emotive significance manifests in particular musical forms. As L.A. Reid, a British contemporary of Maritain notes, 'the dynamics of human response are a very large part of the very materials out of which music builds its constructions' (Reid, 2013, p. 164).<sup>321</sup> So in 'Warum?' the affective dynamics of 'endless questioning' have directly determined the 'aphoristic' rhythmic, motions and proportions of the piece. The ending itself apparently stops 'mid-sentence.'

Harmonically too, the 'tonal space is filled with archetypes' of uncertainty, and more detailed analysis is necessary to explain this. The very first sound, a B flat minor chord, immediately becomes, in the opening two bars, a second inversion of a secondary dominant seventh chord, followed by the dominant seventh itself. The striking effect of this progression is a harmonic motion that is at first hesitant, tonally uncertain, and begs for resolution. At the expressive climax of the piece, between bars 21 and 30, the music revolves around a dominant seventh chord three keys away from home, approached by two increasingly 'tense' chords (a minor supertonic in the first inversion, and an augmented 6<sup>th</sup> chord). The final twelve bars, which

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<sup>320</sup> Particularly notable is that of the German writer Jean Paul (1763-1825) on Schumann's early output.

<sup>321</sup> Reid's study bears close comparison to Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key* and *Feeling and Form*, works with which he was familiar (see Reid, 2013, pp. 127-169). Langer, herself, draws on Reid's notions of artistic forms embodying the dynamic structures of human feeling (not the emotion itself).

twice attempt to slip into the subdominant key (a classical convention), are quietly ‘resigned,’ and generally, those moments when we do reach the home key are transient and uncertain.

The interrelationships between parts of the music—for example, between melody and accompaniment notes—are just as important. A significant feature is the minor or major second dissonances that occur, for example, between E-F, C flat-B flat, and A flat-B flat occurring in bars 5-7. These add disquiet and disjunction to the sound. On one level, they are just the natural outcome of certain alterations to the motif and the juxtaposition of parts: but alternatively, one can imagine the vertical dissonances being ‘poetically’ formative, or primary matter in the composer’s apprehension of the work—a deeper level, intrinsic to the work’s ‘secret’ harmonic life. The piece is a masterful analogue of subjective human experience, without being in any sense tragic or morbidly introverted. More important to our inquiry, it illuminates some of the ways in which a composer’s perceptual imagination becomes *the* chief causal factor in the actual construction of a work. We are sensing that in our fourth poetic phase, that of the modern composer, the genesis of a work lies pre-eminently in the correspondence between nature (any observable experience) and the creative mind. But importantly, the things of nature are utterly subsumed, then transfigured.<sup>322</sup>

And as we will discover later in *Creative Intuition*, Maritain cites Schumann directly:

This is also the reason for which so many of my compositions are hard to understand ... For this reason, too, so many other recent composers do not satisfy me, because—in addition to all their lack of professional skill—they enlarge on lyrical commonplaces. The highest level reached in this type of music does not come up to the point from which my kind of music starts (Schumann, diary entry of 1824, cited in Maritain, 1953, p. 251).

Schumann himself demands that the highest forms of artistry arise by reflecting on any external influence that enthralls the imagination and the senses, but which must then become ‘a poem; that is belongs to the world of the spirit’ and which ‘stems from the consciousness of the poetic mind’ (Schumann in Maritain, 1953, p. 251). These are Schumann’s own words, yet they could have been Maritain’s. To those of us hearing *Warum?*, our apprehension of musical beauty (if we have perceived it so) *must* therefore also logically derive partly from that direct internal conformity: between our knowledge of ‘how unresolved questions feel’ and the materials of

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<sup>322</sup> Reid interprets the subjective pre-eminence of the work in highly Maritainian terms: ‘But assimilation and transformation does not mean annulment or elimination. Music is a new creature, certainly; but in it expressive content can be a contribution to the new emergent. In the alchemy of music, the artist takes up the vital stuff of quite ordinary human encounters and transmits it into the pulses of new autonomous life’ (Reid, 2013, p. 164).

the music we are listening to. In the modern phase, more than ever before, the truth revealed in that conformity is directly and purely expressed.<sup>323</sup>

### III – Returning to the virtues of art more subjectively

Art, as Maritain has said, is primarily to do with that activity of the mind ordered to creation and production—the making of a work. As we have also implied at several points in this thesis, it is relevant to connect this activity with the experience of the work made—rigid partitions between production, mediation and reception being quite unhelpful. Picking up where *Art and Scholasticism* left off (see Maritain, 1962, pp. 10-22), the second chapter of *Creative Intuition* expands on the precept that art is a virtue of the practical intellect in the domain of making, by turning the edicts of the schoolmen towards the origins, character and real experience of artistic creation. Hudson recalls Maritain’s ‘earliest intentions (1) to define the conditions of “honest work” and (2) to liberate the intelligence’ (Hudson, 1987, p. 251). In truth, the former applies more to *Art and Scholasticism*, the latter to *Creative Intuition*. As we have seen, from the very start of *Creative Intuition*, Maritain sought to philosophically ‘liberate’ art, first from Classical notions, and then as it passed through each successive developmental phase in the advent of human subjectivity.

But to counterbalance all he previously said, Maritain now reminds us about the primordial origins and essence of human artistic activity. He notes that art was once only to do with making—with fulfilling a practical need, and that any ‘pleasure of imitation’ or ‘poetic impulse’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 45) which arose, was entirely absorbed into the work of the craftsman. In affirming that art must always be mindful of this fact, Maritain nails his scholastic colours to the mast once and for all, and effectively admits that however far he extends or develops Thomistic thought, he will never contradict it. This, too, is a ‘methodological reminder’ for us as we continue to extend Maritain’s thesis towards music.

#### *Extending Aristotle and Aquinas: the Autonomy of the Artefact*

It is not necessary to dwell at length on matter which Maritain reaffirms from *Art and Scholasticism*, but it is important to outline relevant expansions, particularly as they relate to poetic impulse and the emergence of poetic knowledge. This is the real subject of *Creative Intuition*. Maritain draws two essential distinctions upon which even basic definitions of art

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<sup>323</sup> Later, we will return to the *Phantasiestücke* and to *Des Abends*, the first of the suite, and the question of Maritain’s broad rejection of nineteenth-century, romantic principles in music will be revisited.

rest. First, the Aristotelian distinction between the speculative and the practical intellect,<sup>324</sup> and second (a subsidiary division within practical knowledge), between actions to be done and things to be created. The first is ‘a distinction between two basically different ways that the same power of the soul—the intellect or reason—exercises its activity’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 46). The second separates ‘human actions to be done (within the universe of man’s destiny) and works to be made (by man, but within the universe of things, outside the universe of man’s destiny)’ (Maritain, 1953, pp. 47-48). This latter distinction separates the moral life from artistic activity.

What is straightforward (and essential) to recognise is that the relationship between art and reason is indissoluble—everything stems from the intellect as branches extend from the trunk of a tree. To put it clearer still; poetry stems from the intellect. What is harder to reconcile is the absolute division Maritain draws, following Aquinas, in the practical sphere, between the ‘virtues’ of art and the moral virtues—foremost among which, is *prudence* or practical wisdom concerned with the perfection of the person. Ralph McInerny succinctly describes prudence as:

... the virtue of the practical intellect thanks to which a person judges well as to what will make his actions, and himself, good, and this judgement, in order to be efficacious, depends upon the possession of moral virtues, that is on a steady appetitive orientation to the true good (McInerny, 1988, p. 164).

McInerny reiterates that Maritain ‘sees the capacity of the artist to produce good artefacts as independent of his moral condition’ (McInerny, 1988, p. 165). ‘The fact of a man being a poisoner has nothing against his prose,’ (Maritain, 1960, p. 24) was Maritain’s humorous invocation of Oscar Wilde as a ‘true Thomist.’ And by swiftly dismissing André Gide’s retort that morality is ‘a branch of aesthetics,’ he appears to make the separation between art and prudence irreconcilable. How is an artist to respond? In our case, ‘a theological aesthetic of musical beauty,’ the very title of this thesis, mandates that philosophy (of which aesthetics is a branch) and theology (in which *knowing what to do* is a major concern) are drawn together, not

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<sup>324</sup> The speculative intellect searches for knowledge, truth and insight for its own sake; the practical intellect concerns action, activity and creativity—it is ‘to mould intellectually that which will be brought into being, to judge about ends and means, and to direct or even command our powers of execution’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 46). Concerning this primary division, our earlier comment about the listener apprehending truth in the adequation of the music’s materials with their own and the composer’s experience, demonstrates that appetite is crucial to practical knowledge. As Maritain puts it, truth in practical knowledge ‘is the conformity of the intellect with the straight appetite, with the appetite as straightly tending to the ends with respect to which the thing that man is about to create will exist’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 47). In simpler terms, the composer *desired* the work, as an ‘intellectual determination of actions to be done,’ and our (truth-full) reception of it has not only confirmed that it has been accomplished well, but has competed the composer’s action. Extending our discussion in the previous chapter, we may claim that Schopenhauer presents an idealist ‘parody’ of this situation—wherein music is construed as a straight image of the will, altogether severed from intellectual governance.

prised apart in the creation and apprehension of music.<sup>325</sup> The extent to which the moral life and the artistic life may condition one another is a perfectly viable point of inquiry; not to mention the everyday and profound experiences of music which naturally seem to invest the musical work with ‘religious,’ and therefore, moral qualities.<sup>326</sup> To argue otherwise appears to contradict even Aristotle.

But to Aristotle ... music is the express image and reflexion of moral character. ‘In rhythms and melodies we have the most realistic imitations of anger and mildness as well as of courage, temperance and all their opposites.’ Not only states of feeling but also strictly ethical qualities and dispositions of mind are reproduced by musical imitation ... Music in reflecting character moulds and influences it (Butcher, 1951, p. 130).

However, in *The Responsibility of the Artist*, Maritain (1960) provides a clear and sustainable rationale for his distinction, founded primarily on the unity of the human person, together with the internal principle of activity and movement that resides in any artist. Art in its essence is interpreted as that which exists ‘in the soul and creative dynamism of the artist, or as a particular energy, or vital power ... which exists within man and which man uses to achieve a good work’ (Maritain, 1960, Ch.1, Pt. 2).<sup>327</sup> On this foundation, prudence and art accompany each other in that they do not separate the person, or act in some way ‘schizophrenically.’ This is essential; and so is Maritain’s focus on the good.

The real distinction between art and prudence is strikingly simple, and it also provides the touchstone we need. Both art and prudence concern a perfection of the practical intellect—in prudence as it tends to the good of the person (the moral good); in art, as it pertains to the work made. Maritain turns to St. Thomas to underscore the difference between the virtue of art and that pertaining to the moral life, but he also finds in Aquinas a point of similarity. ‘Art, in this respect *resembles*<sup>328</sup> the virtues of the Speculative Intellect: it causes man to act in a right way, not with regard to the use of man’s own free will, and to the rightness of the human will, but

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<sup>325</sup> Heaney’s (2016) excellent attempt to reconcile music and theological method draws on the writings of the Thomist theologian and philosopher Bernard Lonergan. Neither, however, appear to address the relative autonomy of the artistic and theological virtues.

<sup>326</sup> In *Creative Intuition*, Maritain only briefly deals with the problem which this philosophical division creates; and frankly, he could have done rather better. It may well be ‘a miscalculation’ to give oneself over to ‘a peculiar morality’ in the relentless pursuit of one’s art. But Maritain leaves the matter to theologians, saying ‘we do not have to judge him. God will work it out with him, somehow or other’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 52). In *The Responsibility of the Artist* (1960), Maritain is rather more thorough.

<sup>327</sup> This is exactly the tone of many of Schumann’s own appraisals of his compositional aesthetic, his critiques of other composers, and his essentially liberating view of the listener’s experience. (Tadday, 2007).

<sup>328</sup> Italics added.

with regard to the rightness of a particular operating power' (Maritain, 1960, Ch. 1, Pt. 2).<sup>329</sup> In other words, both Maritain and Aquinas revert to the fundamental category of the speculative intellect, in order to better define the sub-category of the practical intellect which is the domain of artistic making. The following (almost adjacent) passages by Aquinas illustrate the contrast and the resemblance, and they suggest a closer link between art and prudence than we might have expected.

Art is nothing else but "the right reason about certain works to be made." And yet the good of these things depends, not on man's appetitive faculty being affected in this or that way, but on the goodness of the work done ... In order that man may make good use of the art he has, he needs a good will, which is perfected by moral virtue; and for this reason the Philosopher says that there is a virtue of art; namely, a moral virtue, in so far as the good use of art requires a moral virtue. (ST. I-II, q. 57, a. 3).

But is this a thoroughgoing validation of Aristotle's advice that 'no one can be a good poet who is not first a good man' (Butcher, 1951, p. 151)? Only in one respect; and the distinction is subtle but clear. McNerny, with Maritain, interprets the rapport between art and prudence as revolving around the word 'good'—that transcendental property of being which is attained by appetite or desire. He states:

The virtues of the speculative intellect and art are *capacities* to do something well, whether arriving at the truth or producing good artefacts – but they do not insure the good *use* of those capacities. This means that, in order for the artist to use well the art that he has, he must be in possession of moral virtues which perfect his appetites (McNerny, 1988, p. 164).

This is supported by Aquinas, who states 'the truth of the practical intellect depends on conformity with right appetite' (ST. I-II, q. 57, a. 5). The resemblance concerns only the pursuit of the good. Note also that both Aquinas and McNerny distinguish between the created artefact (together with the process of its creation) and its subsequent usage: the two are not the same. Overall though, the third, fourth and fifth articles of question 57 in the Summa I-II, which are possibly the most fulsome commentary on art in Aquinas, do maintain a rigid separation between art (as the perfection of a work) and prudence (the perfection of the person). Maritain is actually very pragmatic about this situation, exhorting us to recognise this as a tension and indeed occasionally a conflict 'between two autonomous worlds' (Maritain, 1960, Ch. 1, Pt. 4).

Art, then, does not literally bear the hallmark (the image) of prudence; but it does bear some likeness in respect of the appetite or desire for the good, the good *use* of the work created, and

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<sup>329</sup> As we have suggested in previous chapters, many components of Stravinsky's compositional aesthetic (expressed most clearly in *The Poetics of Music*) could be distilled to the essence of this statement.



most importantly, its coexistence with the moral life in the unity of the whole person under theegis of the intellect. As he did with Plato, Maritain overhauls and refines Aristotle, via Aquinas. In *Art and Scholasticism*, much of this was inferred; but now, it is explicit.

The situation is that the *autonomy* of the work is inviolable, and that this will lead to occasional tensions.<sup>330</sup> The implications as we continue our Thomistic approach to music are serious. The framework for discussion will permit certain criteria and formulations, but it will disallow others. In labelling our whole inquiry a ‘theological aesthetic,’ for instance, it would be careless to proffer a ‘music-as-theology’ account of aesthetic experience without some very careful stipulations.<sup>331</sup> Music is music and theology is theology (this will become extremely pointed when we turn to Bach). Vague, unqualified assertions suggesting that music illustrates ‘the consummation of the temporal in the eternal’ (Phenix, 1966, p. 106) will not suffice, and ultimately will compromise the moral seriousness of the theological task.

Then, as we continue to address subjective experience, emotion and poetic intuition in and through the musical work, the conditions are no less stringent. Maritain will not accept elements extrinsic to the work or to the artist’s creative intellect attempting to infiltrate the work’s imaginative forms. (Conley, 2012, pp. 242-245). On the contrary, he connects the potential good of a work directly to the internal, appetitive aim of the artist, wherein the artefact is authentically—and only—‘brought into existence by means of the rules discovered by the intellect’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 52). *Poetry* is coexistent with and co-dependent on this ‘discovery,’ as Schumann appears to authenticate.

If Maritain is correct, the autonomy of the work *must* also validate his connatural, intuitive epistemology—the kind of affective, non-conceptual form of knowing he infers, and for which his Thomistic credentials have been questioned. Phenix (1966, p. 98) concurs that the work made *is* the end in itself—it is singular and unique, and that the imposition of the form of the mind upon matter occurs newly in every work.<sup>332</sup> Paradoxically, it is in this singularity through which the intelligently-disclosed rules, ‘share in the infinite suppleness and adaptability of the rules used by prudence ... perspicacity, circumspection, precaution, industry, boldness,

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<sup>330</sup> The level of autonomy Maritain affords to the work is scrutinised by Wilson (2017, pp. 180-183), who contrasts the scholastic approach with the ‘limited truth of modern notions of aesthetic autonomy.’

<sup>331</sup> Heaney (2016, p. 683) worries that in much current discussion in theological aesthetics, ‘musical identities and patterns of experience,’ which Thomistically, we may call virtues of music, are sacrificed at the expense of the theological. The former is simply utilised to validate the latter.

<sup>332</sup> This is also inferred in Langer’s idea of *the commanding form* (Langer, 1953, p. 121)—an epistemology of ‘purely perceptible musical forms intrinsically bound to the forms of human feeling,’ or music defined as ‘the objectification of a purely experiential pattern’ (Lonergan in Heaney, 2016, p. 688).

shrewdness and guile’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 58). The artist, in his own way, is familiar with all these, and thus, art and prudence are not entirely strangers to each other. The possibility of concept-less, or *supra-conceptual* musical knowledge may actually garner support from the thoroughly Thomist notion of instinctively knowing what to do in the moral order. (McInerny, 1988, pp. 74, 138).

As we have previously also shown, Maritain is openly hostile to the broad doctrines of nineteenth century referentialism in music (reflecting his rejection of the Aristotelian notion of pure mimesis in art). Robert Schumann encapsulates, almost prophetically, this exact view and more, in possibly his most censorious and famous critique—that of the Berlioz *Symphony Fantastique*. ‘So much for the programme’ he wrote. ‘All Germany will wish him joy of it: there is always something unworthy, a whiff of the charlatan, about such signposts’ (Schumann in Tadday, 2007, p. 43).<sup>333</sup> From every perspective, Schumann is the first thoroughly Maritainian *artifex* of modernity.

#### **IV - Poetry as the primary rule – beauty as the essential milieu**

The introductory chapters of *Creative Intuition* describe the origin and character of artistic creation—its ontological root; and there are some general synopses we can draw at this point.

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<sup>333</sup> Tadday translates Schumann’s critique in full. It is reproduced here to illustrate the congruence between Maritain’s definitions of art and Schumann’s compositional aesthetic.

Many people worry too much about the difficult question of how far instrumental music can be allowed to go in representing thoughts and events. They are certainly mistaken if they think that composers put pen to paper with the paltry intention of expressing, depicting, painting this or that. But the importance of fortuitous influences or external impressions should not be underrated. There is often an idea at work unconsciously alongside the musical imagination, the eye alongside the ear, and amid all the sounds and notes the eye, this ever-active organ, holds fast certain outlines that may solidify and take distinct shape as the music advances. So the more elements related to the music convey ideas or shapes that were generated with the notes, the more poetic or plastic in expression the composition will be – and the more imaginative or keen the composer’s intrinsic power to conceive, the more his music will elevate or excite. Why should the thought of immortality not have struck a Beethoven as his fancy soared? Why should memories of a great, fallen hero not have inspired him to a piece of music? Why should the recollection of bygone happiness not similarly inspire another? Must we be ungrateful to Shakespeare for having drawn forth a work worthy of himself from the breast of a young composer? Or ungrateful to nature, and deny that we have borrowed some of her beauty and sublimity for our own works? Italy, the Alps, the sea, the dawn of a spring day – would anyone claim that music has never related any of these? No, even smaller, more specific images can lend music so charmingly precise a character that its ability to express such traits amazes us . . . Let us leave open the question of whether there are many poetic moments in the programme of Berlioz’s symphony. The central concern remains, whether the music amounts to anything in itself, with or without text and explication, and, more importantly, whether spirit dwells within. (Schumann in Tadday, 2007, p. 43).

These emphasise the subjective turn Maritain has taken, and hint at radical expansion of a Thomistic aesthetic.

1. Poetic or creative intuition is what originates a work (Maritain begins to utilise the term *creative* where formerly he used the word *poetry*).
2. Creativity is to be seen as an intellectual power of engendering ‘not only the inner concept, but a material (and spiritual) work into which something of our soul overflows’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 55).
3. The will and appetitive powers—the desire for the good of the work—make the intellect go out of itself in a very primordial way, in order to ‘express.’
4. Artistic expression is a natural desire that may even exceed the limits of the intellect.

Now, for the first time, Maritain encapsulates all he has so far stated in a striking and short musical allusion: the intellect, when it utters outwards ‘tends to sing, to manifest itself in a work’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 55). This statement encapsulates much that we have strived to articulate in the thesis so far. In the precepts of Classical and Christian antiquity; in the creative ethos of those composers we have consulted; through each epoch of emerging artistic consciousness. In the emotive, affective experience of the work created, the intellect and the spirit have uttered with or without words, in song or *as* song. It is a very powerful recurrent theme that extends well beyond the analogical, and it is only a marginal extension to infer that *Poetry*, in its claim to subjective primacy, is not just ‘understood as the animating principle of art’ (Potter, 2018, p. 83), but that it animates *melodically*. And this, too, is where beauty, as the ‘transcendental correlative of poetry’ (Potter, 2018, p. 89), is intimately joined by Maritain to the productive, creative act.

Rather than embarking upon a detailed scholastic exposition of beauty (which we might expect), Maritain concludes the opening two chapters of *Creative Intuition* with some brief, general features of beauty, its modes of operation and perception—particularly as they relate to the creative impulse of the artist. His main focus remains the ‘self-involving “turn to the subject”’ (Potter, 2018, p. 84), not as a matter of abstraction or rationalisation, but in the intellect extending beyond itself in order to create. The form of the person literally permeates

the creative idea and the material work;<sup>334</sup> and by virtue of this ‘engendering’ being a fundamentally spiritualised process, it is not devoid of satisfaction, delight, and beauty.<sup>335</sup>

And the pure creativity of spiritual intelligence tends to achieve something in which spiritual intelligence finds its own delight, that is, to produce an object in beauty. Left to the freedom of its spiritual nature, the intellect strives to engender in beauty (Maritain, 1953, p. 55).

As the first mention of beauty in *Creative Intuition*, this text is crucial. It establishes the fundamental separation between fine (free) art and the realm of the useful. Beauty is of no use for it is an essentially spiritual objective; and when the intellect delights, it has nothing to do with utility and everything to do with its predisposition for beauty. In artistic creation, the mind, hand, or ear of the artist conforms to the ‘vital actuation or determination through which this free creativity expresses itself’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 59), especially, and most spiritually, in its longing for beauty. It is therefore not wholly accurate to render beauty as *solely* the objective or end of the creative act, or of fine art. As Maritain infers, beauty itself also activates the desire to engender, albeit recognising that beauty cannot be summoned (conjured into being) or particularised. A transcendental is just that—it goes ‘beyond any genus or category’ (Maritain 1953, p. 163), but it does permeate all things.<sup>336</sup> ‘Beauty first and last of all the transcendentals’ (Spencer, 2018) may be a slightly aphoristic trope to re-align the hierarchy of the properties of being (and to defend Maritain); but in the sphere of musical creation, it fruitfully defines the vital milieu which is so familiar and significant to every composer, performer or listener.<sup>337</sup> Beauty is immediate and music is unexplainable. These experiential realities cohere in the work that is created and in the creative process.

In Maritain’s account of our intellectual-and-sensory awareness of the beautiful given, we become aware of an intelligibility in the sensory given itself. I would contend that this matches our experience: upon seeing some beautiful sight or hearing beautiful sounds we are often struck by the sheer meaningfulness

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<sup>334</sup> The soul, here defined as the form of the person, is characterised by Maritain as that from which ‘the various operations of life’ emanate. ‘As soon as the human soul exists, the powers with which it is naturally endowed also exist’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 106).

<sup>335</sup> Trapani notes Maritain’s use of the term *intelligentiated sense* ‘to identify this interdependent union of sense and intellectual intuition. Although prominent in *Creative Intuition*, his use of that term actually first appears in a celebrated footnote from *Art and Scholasticism*’ (Trapani, 2000, p. 11).

<sup>336</sup> Defending Maritain’s position in the Thomistic debate as to whether beauty really qualifies as a transcendental, Mark Spencer asserts that ‘The Thomist should conceive of being (*ens*) fundamentally as beauty, that is, as holistically giving itself’ (Spencer, 2018, p. 3).

<sup>337</sup> James Matthew Wilson sees no reason to call into question the Schoolmen’s ordering of the transcendental properties of being (unity, truth, goodness and beauty), stating that, ‘in experience there is no significant temporal differentiation between the perception of these ontologically identical but conceptually different properties’ (Wilson, 2017, p. 229). Experience is the key, and accordingly, there is no obstruction to beauty emerging as the first and most immediate cognitive awareness (as well as the last and final aim of art).

of the beauty, without in any way being able to conceptually or linguistically articulate that beauty (Spencer, 2018, p. 17).

Bound to the autonomy of the work and the desire for the good of the work (virtues of the practical intellect in the domain of artistry) is the natural apprehension of beauty. It is the metaphysical ‘climate’ that surrounds the artist—it is the air that they breathe (see Trapani, 2002, p. 183). Maritain is not alone in this portrayal of the awareness of beauty inhering to a primitive, subjective and intuitive knowledge of the work made or to be made. ‘I believe “Artistic meaning” belongs to the sensuous construct as such; this alone is beautiful, and contains all that contributes to its beauty’ says Langer (1942, p. 208). We must remember, though, that the reason which is brought to bear through the virtues of the practical intellect, is nondiscursive (certainly), nonconceptual (perhaps), and that we are working with a type of reason that is intuitive and obscure—which inheres to ‘the center of the soul,’ and where the intellect is active ‘at the root of the soul’s powers and conjointly’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 63).

Poetic or creative intuition is established as *the* primary ‘rule’ of art, for it involves far more than just what basically pleases the senses. Maritain submits a deeper conception whereby the senses, infused with intelligence, surrender to creative or poetic intuition, and in a manner construed as *melodic*.<sup>338</sup> This is a fundamental account of the genesis of an artwork, but presented in mostly un-scholastic terms: in vocabulary that directly appeals to those most acquainted with artistic creation. Maritain intends to state the reality of how things are, more practically and less theoretically, and he is introducing a process of epistemic renovation in which the intellectual and practical begin to resemble the spiritual and the transcendental. The work of art, as oriented to beauty, draws towards the work of divine creation and the work of God. ‘Human art is, as it were, the grandchild of God’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 65).

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<sup>338</sup> Maritain draws a parallel with Augustine and love, in which all rules effectively vanish in the face of perfection. ‘Love and do what you want’ effectively becomes ‘cling to your creative intuition and do what you want.’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 60). In both cases, the quality and degree of perfection is what matters.

## Chapter 6

### Music and poetic knowledge: a 'separate, special analysis'

#### Part 2

Where if not in musical creation could be found a better image of the creation of a world? ... And how to find for uncreated creative knowledge a more instructive image than created creative knowledge (Maritain, 1943, p. 82).

Music was born free; and to win freedom its destiny. It will become the most complete of all reflexes of Nature by reason of its untrammelled immateriality. Even the poetic word ranks lower in point of incorporeality. It can gather together and disperse, can be motionless repose or wildest tempestuousity; it has the extremest heights perceptible to man—what other art has these?—and its emotion seizes the human heart with that intensity which is independent of “the idea” (Busoni, 1962, p. 77).

If it were possible to distil Maritain's stated aims in the early part of *Creative Intuition* into a single word, that word would be *freedom*. Not in the clichéd sense of the artist possessing a self-referential, autonomous concept, unmoored from reality and the observation of nature. That is idealism. But free in that the poetic sense ('the secret life' of art) transforms and invests the things of life and nature with new, additional forms and new associations between forms, 'disclosing a deeper reality, more akin to our dreams, angers, anguish, or melancholy' (Maritain, 1953, p. 73). Freedom, also, in the desire to escape the constraints of rational language and its logical laws; and ultimately, freedom 'from the intelligible or logical sense itself' (Maritain, 1953, p. 73). Maritain's modern epoch (his fourth phase) is marked by an obscurity in which the poetic sense subsumes, or overwhelms the logical sense.<sup>339</sup>

How music in the modern era<sup>340</sup> illustrates this is not too difficult to show, although with certain hesitations. In the highly idiosyncratic approaches of Debussy or Schoenberg, for instance, the aesthetic 'turn' towards the subjective reveals absolutely no contempt for nature; but conversely, an intensified desire to transfigure it.<sup>341</sup> 'La Cathédrale Engloutie' (1910), one of Debussy's piano preludes (Ex. 3, in Appendix. 1), or *Verklärte Nacht* (1899), Schoenberg's sensory and evocative early masterpiece (Ex. 4, in Appendix. 1) clearly obey these criteria. In both works, the expressive character—utterly different in each—is immanent and obvious in

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<sup>339</sup> Unable to fully reach this conclusion, Langer nonetheless proposes a type of nondiscursive, non-propositional form beyond logic: 'a symbolism of such vitality that it harbours a principle of development in its own elementary forms, as a really good symbolism is apt to do' (Langer, 1942, p. 240).

<sup>340</sup> The term 'modern era' here is taken in its common musicological sense, as connoting those composers who typified innovative new approaches around the turn of the twentieth century. As we have noted, Maritain's 'modern phase' is not exactly analogous.

<sup>341</sup> Donnellan (2003, pp. 57-58) notes Debussy's 'semi-mystical belief in the freedom of music and its oneness with nature.'

the organic whole of the work, and intentionally so. In the former, a striking mythical image is creatively structured into a vast panoply of piano sonorities;<sup>342</sup> in the latter, an actual poem is ‘transfigured’ into highly complex textures for string sextet. *Verklärte Nacht* is also, then, emblematic of the freedom of musical thought from language.<sup>343</sup>

Debussy, Maritain notes, typified the right sort of freedom—a deliverance of sensibility, ‘which pointed straight to poetry itself’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 77). About Debussy, he continues:

In the process of transforming nature, language and the logical or intelligible sense, everything was directed, as to the final end, to the poetic sense itself: in other words, to the pure, free, and immediate passage, into the work, of the creative intuition born in the depths of the soul (Maritain, 1953, p. 77).<sup>344</sup>

These comments recall Maritain’s earlier essay ‘The Freedom of Song’—part of an overlooked, short collection of writings titled *Art and Poetry* (Maritain, 1943). In Debussy’s music, he writes, ‘creative force and humility found once more the genuine conditions of art, opened the fountainheads of the working intelligence, broke the rules of the schools, restored to the work its truth’ (Maritain, 1943, p. 94).<sup>345</sup> Later in *Creative Intuition*, in the context of painting, Maritain elides into musical vocabulary to describe the way in which nature, language and the logical sense are all transformed by the free and unrestricted entry of poetic intuition into the work. This is a linguistic pattern that he will utilise more and more.

Poetic intuition does as it pleases with natural appearances. It catches them in its own inner music. In its expansion towards the work it takes them away from their material existence in nature, and makes them attuned to itself ... becoming parts of a total song laden with meaning and significance (Maritain, 1953, p. 226).

But the hesitations are these. As we have previously said, the downside of making quite such clear assertions, particularly as they concern the Western musical canon, lies in the manifest complexity of works, and the highly idiosyncratic approaches of individual composers at the turn of the twentieth century. On closer scrutiny, ‘La Cathédrale Engloutie’ and *Verklärte Nacht*, could be taken as having strayed dangerously close to programme music for Maritain’s

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<sup>342</sup> ‘La Cathédrale Engloutie’ (the Sunken Cathedral) is titled after the mythological sunken city of Ys and its mysterious ruined cathedral, supposedly in Douarnenez Bay in Brittany.

<sup>343</sup> *Verklärte Nacht*, a one-movement ‘tone poem,’ was directly inspired by, and intended to be a musical rendering of Richard Dehmel’s 1896 poem of the same name.

<sup>344</sup> Together with Satie, Rouault, Chagall, T.S Eliot and more, who, to Maritain, epitomise the free poetic sense directly entering their works.

<sup>345</sup> In stark contrast to the ‘mystagogy and magical pretensions’ (Maritain, 1943, p. 94) of an unnamed ‘other,’ which, it is safe to assume, means Wagner.

liking. By his own admission, Schoenberg describes his creative process in more conceptual (idealised) and less intuitive terms than expected.

Thus it will be as astonishing to you as it was to all my friends when I came with the score of *Verklärte Nacht* and showed them one particular measure on which I had worked a full hour, though I had written the entire score of four hundred and fifteen measures in three weeks. This measure is indeed a little complicated since, according to the artistic conviction of this period (the post-Wagnerian), I wanted to express the idea *behind* the poem, and the most adequate means to that end seemed a complicated contrapuntal combination: a leitmotiv and its inversion played simultaneously. This combination was not the product of a spontaneous inspiration but of an extra-musical intention, of a cerebral reflection. The technical labor which required so much time was in adding such subordinate voices as would soften the harsh frictions of this combination (Schoenberg, 1950, p. 155-156).

Did the pure poetic sense desert Schoenberg; or was he just engaged in a subsequent (or simultaneous) technical complication as a necessary stage in materialisation?<sup>346</sup> Was he struggling to formalise a concept? Certainly *Style and Idea*, Schoenberg's compositional manifesto, displays the influence of Schopenhauer,<sup>347</sup> and the description above conveys an intense effort at idealisation—even to the extent of providing an exact 'auditory' picture. From a performer's or listener's perspective also, the bar in question (among many others) is alarmingly complicated and very highly wrought.<sup>348</sup> And by retrospectively adding a title of such specificity to his Preludes, Debussy fully intends to induce in the listener ideas and concepts extraneous to a more distilled grasp of the work's 'poetry' through sound alone.<sup>349</sup> Notably, in 'The Freedom of Song,' Maritain balances his approval of Debussy's aesthetic approach with a cautionary note. 'It was a deliverance however of art still more than of poetry, which remained too closely linked to psychology, to affective appearances, diluted now and then in the too fleeting flow of an emotion that did not reach the soul' (Maritain, 1943, p. 94).<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> This question should be balanced by the fact that Schoenberg took just three weeks to complete the entire work, which lasts around thirty minutes.

<sup>347</sup> Of the five references to Schopenhauer in *Style and Idea* (Schoenberg, 1950, pp. 1, 17, 18, 38, 194), all but the last are highly sympathetic, although Schoenberg does immediately stress Schopenhauer's incapacity to provide realistic analogues for his 'wonderful thought.' Schoenberg steps back from the kind of nonconceptual, poetic 'knowing' which Maritain proposes, stating 'Since music as such lacks a material subject, some look beyond its effects for purely formal beauty, others for poetic procedures (Schoenberg, 1950, p. 1).

<sup>348</sup> The two bars at Letter 'H' in the score are reproduced in the appendix.

<sup>349</sup> The title 'La Cathédrale Engloutie' is inscribed at the bottom of the last page of the score, apparently to encourage an intuitive understanding of the work before forming a conceptual image of the work's extramusical associations (which are very particular). The forward to the Henle edition of the *Préludes* (1984, p. 7) notes that the titles may have been added later, but that most information we have is anecdotal.

<sup>350</sup> Similarly, Busoni's strident critique of program music (Busoni, 1962, pp. 80-82) belies a more subtle agenda, in which the epithets *absolute* and *program*, taken as contradictory approaches to form, are viewed as unhelpful distractions to determining what is truly free (and poetic) in composition. That said, Busoni describes the panoply of techniques and tricks employed in programmatic composition as 'auxiliaries, of which good use



There is, perhaps, the suspicion that Debussy remained a little too close to the Romantic aesthetic and to representation, but Maritain is not forthright here.

Mostly though, it is safe to say that the modern composer excels in transfiguring expectations of sound (in previous epochs, ruled by overtly rational movements in their design).<sup>351</sup> Logical reason is absorbed by an intense focus on particular auditory elements, intelligible to the composer; and what we are left with is essentially freedom from the conceptual (not reason itself, which is a single power of the soul). Busoni's thesis, quoted earlier, is driven by this principle; and what both Maritain and Busoni offer is an extremely elevated and pure view, to which some degree of latitude is surely needed when judging specific musical works. On the other hand, the strength of this approach—of drawing bold distinctions and making such daring assertions, is that it provides a reliable yardstick for the very flexibility we need to assess highly idiosyncratic works and elements of style.<sup>352</sup>

But now, Maritain makes the first sensationally bold and controversial epistemic claim of *Creative Intuition*. It is this claim which returns us to our opening discussion about the very possibility of knowledge that is unconceptualisable (more experience than knowledge). Through this form of knowledge, 'reason possesses a life both deeper and less conscious than its articulate logical life' (Maritain, 1953, p. 75). Maritain has arrived at this hypothesis by observing the freedom of the poetic sense in the modern epoch, and thereby noting the profound epistemic implications this freedom entails.<sup>353</sup> The almost adjacent positioning of the following passages categorically shows this transference.

This poetic sense, which is but one with poetry itself, is the inner, ontologic entelechy of the poem, and gives it its very being and substantial significance ... in modern art it demands to be freed, at any cost ...

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can be made upon a broad canvas, but which, taken by themselves, are no more to be called music than wax figures may pass for monuments' (Busoni, 1962, p. 82).

<sup>351</sup> 'It is in music [of the modern epoch] that poetry had its best chance. It sought with more sensitive antennae; it touched several times what can hardly be seized' (Maritain, 1943, p. 93). Here an unlikely comparison of aesthetic criteria can be drawn; with Adorno's belief that music had progressed to a state of ideal liberation in the free atonality of Berg and Schoenberg, and that the consequent movement towards serialism and the reification of construction actually represented the negation of free expression. In Adorno's own words, 'twelve-tone rationality approaches superstition ... a closed system ... opaque even unto itself' (Adorno, 2016, p. 44). Thus poetry and freedom in this brief 'moment' of the modern epoch arguably stood no chance, and here, ironically, Adorno and Maritain would coincide.

<sup>352</sup> Haynes (2015) emphasises the robustness of Maritain's theory in providing such well-defined criteria, especially in respect of free (fine) art—naming what should be included/excluded from this category.

<sup>353</sup> Raïssa Maritain's description of the poetic sense is significant. "'It is in no way identical with the intelligible sense, as the soul of man is in no way identical with his speech; and it is inseparable from the formal structure of the poetic work: whether the work is clear or obscure, the poetic sense is there, whatever becomes of the intelligible sense'" (in Maritain, 1953, p. 75). The sense of the primacy of the poetic sense is tangible, which is, perhaps, unsurprising in a poet.

The process I just described is a process of liberation from conceptual, logical discursive, reason ... it is by no means, in its essence, a process of liberation from reason itself ... For reason indeed does not only articulate, connect, and infer (Maritain, 1953, p. 75).

If the first aim of *Creative Intuition* is reducible to the word *freedom*, then all ensuing aims will flow from the axiom that reason ‘sees,’ and that this *seeing* is the first ‘act and function’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 75) of the intellect. Prior to logical reason, comes intuitive reason, and prior to that must come intuitivity itself. Pondering the genesis of the poet’s inspiration, Maritain enlists Aristotle to underscore that God is the great mover in the soul (as well as in the universe); and thus, at its root, intuition is simply to perceive movement. Sullivan depicts this as ‘a kind of self communion, a contemplation of an act of affective inclination, a mental introversion’, and he notes that for St. Thomas, ‘the human mind turned in upon itself is especially apt for the reception of slight or subtle motions which take place in the imagination’ (Sullivan, 1964, p. 112).<sup>354</sup> ‘The starting point of reasoning is not reasoning but something greater’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 90) is Maritain’s radical claim. Is it *too* daring to adjust his vocabulary slightly: reason also *hears*?

## I – The musical preconscious

The distinction between the chapter ‘A Thomistic Philosophy of Music: Conceivable and Essential’ and the present chapter is becoming clearer. In the former, guided strictly by Maritain and St. Thomas, we set out a philosophical and intellectual framework for the apprehension of music as it concerns the work of the composer. Now, previous epistemological boundaries are being expanded (or projected backwards) to the point of conceptual dissolution, on the supposition that there is a prior ‘guiding activity of the intelligence’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 81). In stating that intuition is both ‘a primeval activity of the intellect’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 76), and that by functioning in a preconceptual or non-conceptual manner, its origin and character is purely expressive, Maritain reaches for extremes. Three supportive comments can be made here—two of them drawn directly from *Creative Intuition*, but a third, joining Maritain’s premise to a far older musical source.

First, the difference between ‘a philosopher looking at things’<sup>355</sup> and an artist dealing practically with things necessitates some categoric flexibility. It is likely that logical reason and rational thought (an intellectual framework) should coexist with the pure poetic sense in the

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<sup>354</sup> The reference is (ST. I, q. 84, a. 7, ad 3).

<sup>355</sup> A very frequent description Maritain gave himself.

creation of a work, and that in practice, an artist also transforms the use of logical reason rather than abolishes it altogether. Mentioning Debussy and Schoenberg (particularly in the latter's more conceptualised process) has suggested as much.<sup>356</sup> Maritain, though, draws clear distinctions; and in doing so, he aims always at the purest and most essential divisions concerning the intellect, whilst at the same time accepting an overlay of different forms of knowing in the unity of the whole person.

Second, it is vital that we join Maritain in underscoring the supremacy of *absolute* reason, which is 'the guiding activity of the intellect' (Maritain, 1953, p. 81) and which, because it is divinely implanted, cannot be abolished. There is a fundamental difference between conceptual, discursive or logical 'reasoning' and the unqualified, necessary and autonomous spiritual power of reason itself. Some manner of 'intuitivity' or dynamic perception should, in Maritain's hypothesis, accompany absolute reason, which does lead him to worry whether poetry can be reconciled with reason in such a profound way.<sup>357</sup> (Maritain, 1953, p. 91). He nonetheless sets out to prove that it can.

### ***Reason 'Hears'***

Both points just raised coalesce into a third, which recalls the most significant philosopher of music in Christian Antiquity. We have noted several times that Aquinas accepts the thought of St. Augustine on a particular matter. With the sixth book of *De musica* to hand, Maritain might also have found gainful support from Augustine's inquiry into the nature and origin of musical sound, and its relationship to reason and beauty. In setting out to prove the existence in us of an unconscious, spiritual and engendering activity of the soul, Maritain poses the same kind of

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<sup>356</sup> Sean Sullivan notes the evidential coexistence of conceptual and nonconceptual awareness in the forming of a work. 'Even though an intuition uniquely 'poetic' is formally determined as such by an intelligible in act other than a species or psychic similitude, it nevertheless entails by necessity – in so far as it has a representational aspect – a certain conceptual determination, however inconsequential. In view of this, Maritain notes, "I would not say that (the intellect) then knows without concepts, but, rather, it knows by using as its formal means something other than concepts"' (Sullivan, 1964, p. 73). The quotation here is from *The Degrees of Knowledge* (Maritain, 1959, p. 73). John Trapani also highlights Maritain's broadness in affording the term 'concept' a generous range of senses; noting that 'nothing could be a greater error ... than to reduce all senses of this term to the "technically formulated concept" of modern philosophy' (Trapani, 2011, p. 38). Trapani also notes that over time Maritain's thought progressed; from regarding concepts as intrinsic to *nonphilosophical* or *divinatory* knowledge, 'albeit functioning in a different way' (Trapani, 2011, p. 38); to a hypothesis of a fully non-conceptual, divinatory functioning of the intellect.

<sup>357</sup> The line from John Donne's *Batter My Heart*, 'Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,' is apposite. The poet simultaneously confirms the divine source of absolute reason, and questions reason's ability to influence the prudential life of the person (due to 'allegiances' which caused that person to reject reason in the first place). Maritain ponders the condition of any artform which denies absolute reason, proposing that 'the mania of the surrealists irrupts from below ... a [Hegelian] philosophy of absolute immanence.' Interestingly, he asserts that 'the Surrealists have had no composers' (Maritain, 1953, p. 82).

questions in the same kind of ways as Augustine's inquisitive disciple. What are the hidden *numbers* (the latter asks) which bring judgement on delight? How could the sense of delight operate 'unless it itself were imbued with numbers?' (Augustine, 2002, p. 350). 'What is it we love in sensible harmony?' (Augustine, 2002, p. 351), and how is this so? And so on. There *must* be a greater knowledge—one simultaneously higher, deeper, and more essential in the soul; and as Augustine concluded, the judicial sense itself submits to absolute reason with which the soul is endowed.

In his own methodical way, Augustine sought to distinguish and understand the various species of sound as they are sensed by the body, whilst noticing that in experience, some coexist, overlap, and are sensed together. And Augustine, too, worried whether physical delight in sound *should* be reconciled with reason. But his general trajectory and conclusions are clear. Reason is not only the signature of beauty in sensory objects, but also, according to the whole tone of *De musica*, reason wonders (Augustine, 2002, p. 354) and it certainly 'hears.' It acts in order that we hear rightly, and thus, reason guides and structures our apprehension of tones, of rhythms and melodies. At this point we have only noted that reason is a spiritual bedrock for all forms of knowing—whether they be philosophical-intellectual, conceptual or discursive types, or their opposites in the intuitive, perceptual sphere. With Maritain and Augustine, we have agreed that reason sees and *hears*, but we have not yet proposed an affiliation between the poetic realm and reason—a prior affiliation that is deeper than between reason and its more conceptual derivatives.

Returning to the common experience of the artist for evidence, Maritain stipulates that in poetic experience, our intuitive apprehension and ensuing poetic knowledge proves 'the existence in us of a spiritual—not animal—unconscious activity' (Maritain, 1953, p. 91). This is the thrust of the central chapters of *Creative Intuition*, and in an intriguing nod to Plato, he names this activity 'the *musical* unconscious or preconscious' (Maritain, 1953, p. 92).<sup>358</sup>

[I]f there is in the spiritual unconscious a nonconceptual or preconceptual activity of the intellect even with regard to the birth of concepts, we can with greater reason assume that such a nonconceptual activity of the intellect, such a nonrational activity of reason, in the spiritual unconscious, plays an essential part in the genesis of poetry and poetic inspiration (Maritain, 1953, pp. 99-100).

Maritain is attempting to relate his ideas to an audience unfamiliar with Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy. His language is generous, descriptive and poetic, and he draws on a vast synthesis

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<sup>358</sup> This is essentially different in nature to 'the *deaf* unconscious' of Freudian psychology, which is 'deaf to the intellect, and structured into a world of its own apart from the intellect' (Maritain, 1953, p. 92).

of sources to establish that beneath and before ‘the universe of concepts, logical connections, rational discursus and rational deliberation, in which the activity of the intellect takes definite form and shape,’ there exists ‘the hidden workings of an immense and primal preconscious life’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 94). It is vital to emphasise the theological import of this situation. We are describing a spiritual condition in which the creative ‘seeing’ or ‘hearing’ of the human person (their primary cognitive intellectual activity) is quickened through its participation in ‘the uncreated divine light ... which is in every man, through its pure spirituality ceaselessly in act’ (Maritain, 1953, pp. 96-97).<sup>359</sup> Once more, Maritain (*via* Aquinas) relocates Aristotelian belief (the *illuminating* or *agent* intellect resident in a person’s soul and structure), and with Aquinas, he construes this spiritual light as a ‘mode of participation in the Divine that is distinctive of the human person ... fashioned in God’s own image and likeness’ (Trapani, 2011, p. 63). In their own ways and contexts, Augustine and Maritain draw similar conclusions about the dynamic, activating spiritual powers inhabiting the *ontologically* complete person.<sup>360</sup>

### ***The Melodic Ontology of Poetic Intuition***

This, then, is the character of the spiritual preconscious. We know we are thinking, but know not how, or of what. Before any concepts and judgements we have insight. Prior to either the formation of conceptual or logical knowledge, or the engendering of non-rational, nonconceptual forms of intuitive ‘knowing,’ we simply *know*. The defining trait of the spiritual preconscious is its ceaseless action—its restlessness illuminates. Maritain summarises: ‘I have suggested calling it, also, musical unconscious, for, being one with the root activity of reason, *it contains from the start a germ of melody*’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 99).<sup>361</sup>

I believe it is impossible to take too lightly what Maritain has just stated. Why employ such a particular musical word, or element, if not to distil more than just metaphorical or analogical meaning from the term? To reiterate; the spiritual preconscious (a generating power) is taken as being one with the root activity (a determining power) of reason; and this is termed ‘musical’

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<sup>359</sup> A ready parallel can be drawn with the wisdom that exists in God from all eternity, but which is directly and easily apprehensible by simply focussing one’s attention upon it. ‘*Cogitare ergo de illa sensus est consummatus*’ (Wisdom, 6:16). Here, knowledge (wisdom) requires no concept as it (she) shows what to do.

<sup>360</sup> How they proceed from this point in their respective inquiries is somewhat divergent. For Augustine, the ascent to divine reason culminates inevitably in the annihilation of all aesthetic sensibility. For Maritain, absolute reason and the existence of the spiritual unconscious, will lead to an ever more penetrating focus on the emergence of poetry, art and the ‘divination’ of aesthetic beauty (as the primary analogate of God’s transcendental beauty). If a slightly crass aphorism may be permitted here, Augustine, it might be said, aims ‘onwards and upwards.’ Maritain, ‘inwards and upwards.’

<sup>361</sup> Italics added.

due to its the fertile potential for growth. Melody, most simply defined, is a linear succession or *growth* of note pitches (usually regarded as pleasing to hear).

Every motive—so it seems to me—contains, like a seed, its life germ within itself ... And so, in each motive, there lies the embryo of its fully develop form; each one must unfold itself differently, yet each obediently follows the law of eternal harmony. *This form is imperishable, though it be unlike every other.* The motive in a composition with program bears within itself the same natural necessity; but it must, even in its earliest phase of development, renounce *its own proper mode of growth* (Busoni, 1962, p. 81).

Busoni's portrayal of the sort of awareness which is free of rational knowledge, abstractions and ideas which terminate in 'conceptualized externals' (Maritain, 1953, p. 110), is, paradoxically, affirmed by renouncing any music which repudiates the freedom of the imaginative spirit.<sup>362</sup> For Maritain and Busoni alike, poetry begins 'in this root life where the powers of the soul are common,' and that 'the first obligation imposed on the poet is to consent to be brought back to the hidden place near the centre of the soul, where this totality exists in the state of a creative source' (Maritain, 1953, p. 111). If *melody* really is an actuation of this source—a form of *musical* knowledge-in-act—then melody is extremely important indeed.

## II – Melody, subjectivity and the preconscious

In dealing with a text of the scale of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, we have adopted a mostly sequential approach in order to lessen the chance of misinterpretation. Musical reflections, analysis and comments drawn directly from the words of composers, as well as sources in the field of musical aesthetics, have been woven through this. But, a thematic turn must now be taken precisely because of the significance afforded to melody; and having detected an epistemological application of real originality, we need to test its range.

Later in the text, Maritain notes that the musician's poetic experience remains 'to a large extent, hidden in the preconscious' (Maritain, 1953, p. 250), as contrasted to that of the poet, which soon formulates into linguistic cognition. A key passage we have encountered before is emblematic of the moment at which spiritual, melodic actuation occurs in the preconscious.

Poetic experience is still freer, still more immersed in the internal recesses of subjectivity, still closer to the need and longing of the spirit for utterance, in the composer than in the poet—"where the word stops,

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<sup>362</sup> Busoni (1962, p. 80) is a little more generous to Wagner than either Maritain or Stravinsky, proposing that he inhabits an entirely self-contained world beyond the reaches of other program music; but the essential critique is much the same.

there starts the song, *exaltation of the mind bursting into voice*,” as St. Thomas puts it (Maritain, 1953, p. 251).

The sentence from the prologue to the *Commentary on the Psalms* is interpreted to mean that melody irrupts because it is infinitely better suited to the task of expression than language; and crucially, this is supported by the exact and immediately surrounding contexts of Aquinas’s exhortation—which Maritain does not fully exploit. The previous two sentences warrant mentioning, as does the one immediately following. Here, melody or song (called *hymnus* by Aquinas) is construed as both ‘laudative’ and ‘confessional,’ underlining the form of expression involved. It is an individual vocal response in praise or prayer, and the latter is termed *soliloquium*—emphasising its linear, teleological dimension. Aquinas binds musical expression and embodiment to theological knowing, with the aim of elevating the intellect towards God.<sup>363</sup> Maritain, as he continues to infuse Thomistic method into his study of poetic creativity, extracts from Aquinas ways to depict melody as the primary poetic offspring of the spiritual preconscious—the sound of ‘that inner dialogue by which we converse continually with ourselves or with God’ (Maritain, 1943, p. 98).

But there is a reluctance in Maritain to offer reflection on musical works, which may explain why he turns to Arthur Lourié, a largely forgotten Russian contemporary of Stravinsky.<sup>364</sup> He enlists Lourié to voice his ideas about melody, and to propose ‘the obscure but privileged freedom of melody as the potency of poetic knowledge’ (Emerson, 2014, p. 233).<sup>365</sup> In need of

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<sup>363</sup> As the chapter *Musical Beauty, God and the Church: Historical-Ecclesiological Contexts* shows, it is only to be expected that the Psalms are the vital context for defining melody. Aquinas’s text infers that melody is not only better suited to the required (spiritual) expression, but that language inevitably gives way to purely exclamatory and joyful sound. The passage is given in full here.

There is the deprecativ or laudative mode; and this is found in this book; because whatever is said in the other books in the aforesaid modes, is put here by the mode of praise and prayer: below (Psalm 9) *I will confess to you, Lord, etc. I will narrate etc.* And thus he says *He gave a confession*, because he is speaking by the mode of confessing. Hence the reason for the title is drawn, which is *The beginning of the book of hymns, or of the soliloquies of the Prophet David concerning Christ*. A hymn is the praise of God with song; a song is the exultation of the mind dwelling on eternal things, bursting forth in the voice. Therefore he teaches how to praise God with exultation. A soliloquy is the conversation of man with God one to one, or speaking within himself alone, because this suits one who praises, and one who prays. The end purpose of this Scripture is prayer, which is the raising of the mind to God (Aquinas, 2012, trans. H. McDonald).

<sup>364</sup> The entry for Lourié in *Grove Music Online* (Camajani, 2001) is extremely brief and dated. Early stylistic influences are listed as Debussy and Busoni (the latter also a philosophical influence), and Lourié also experimented with impressionistic and atonal techniques. After a decade utilising a neo-classical approach, he developed a modal melodic style with a high degree of metric flexibility, influenced by Russian chant, and employing pandiatonic harmonies (non-functional use of scale tones). Lourié’s later compositional approach and his theoretical writings coincide with his proximity to Maritain after 1924.

<sup>365</sup> Lourié is the focus of only one recent volume (Móricz and Morrison, 2014). The chapter by Caryl Emerson (pp. 196-268) provides an excellent, detailed account of the relationship between Lourié and the Maritains—one which lasted from pre-war years in Paris until Lourié’s death in Princeton, USA in 1966. Biographical

a composer to lend him the authority he clearly displayed with poetry and painting, Maritain plunders Lourié's essay *An Inquiry Into Melody* (Lourié, 1929, pp. 3-11), quoting passages verbatim, interlaced with comments of his own.<sup>366</sup>

### *The nature and character of melody*

"Every melody," Lourié puts it, "has the property of revealing some intimate truth, and of discovering the original reality, both psychological and spiritual, of the one who creates the melody. *Melody discloses the nature of the subject, and not that of the object.* To be sure, it can espouse the object, and become the expression of it, but its essential predestination lies in the revelation of the very nature of the subject from whom it proceeds. . . . The quality of the melody depends on categories of moral-aesthetic unity. . . . Melody is inaccessible to the logic of our consciousness (contrary to harmony and rhythm); in the face of it our reason remains powerless, for melody is essentially irrational. There can be an angelic melody, but not an angelic rhythm, because in eternity there is no longer time, but there is and there will ever be praise. . . ." (Maritain, 1953, pp. 252-253).

It is hard to discern from the text above whether Maritain has stimulated Lourié's thought, or visa-versa, and it unnecessary to do so. Lourié, it is certain, was a regular visitor at the Maritain's Thomistic study circle in Meudon after his move to Paris, remaining a lifelong friend and correspondent; and like Maritain he fell under the anti-positivist influence of Henri Bergson earlier on (Móricz, 2013, p. 118). Neither is it necessary to depict Lourié as Maritain's muse in order to see that for Maritain, Lourié's account of melody harmonised with his own explanation of poetic knowledge as a spiritual actuation in the preconscious life of the intellect. Co-authors, then? Perhaps. Because Maritain does not extensively develop Lourié's thesis on melody, we need to tease out its components more thoroughly, and interpret his rather colourful language.<sup>367</sup> Lourié's prime motivation was 'the reestablishment of melody's central position

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material from this work will not be gone over again as our focus remains on melody itself. Throughout the text, however, and in Lourié scholarship generally, Maritain is often cited as a 'Neo-Thomist'—an ascription roundly rejected by Maritain himself and in Maritain scholarship. Shadle (2010) typifies this in his appraisal of the Thomistic influence on Parisian artists before the war, but nonetheless confirms that 'Maritain's philosophical influence on musical life in inter-war Paris remains largely uninvestigated.' (Shadle, 2010, p. 84).

<sup>366</sup> Lourié's essay reappeared in *La Vie Intellectuelle*, December 23, 1936. In *The Freedom of Song*, the final chapter of *Art and Poetry*, Maritain speaks of 'certain errors of philosophers who demand for their philosophy the privileges of a knowledge reserved to the composer, the painter, the poet' (Maritain, 1943, p. 97). Ten years later, in *Creative Intuition*, his hesitations concerning music are no less apparent, which accounts for his claim that *An Inquiry Into Melody* is the 'most significant testimony of the way in which poetic experience manifests itself in the composer' (Maritain, 1953, p. 252).

<sup>367</sup> Fallon insists that Maritain's use of the word melody is vague. 'Although Maritain insisted that poetic knowledge is manifested only in works of art, he never successfully demonstrated this in his writings on music, the very art he felt most directly touched the source of artistic creativity. His descriptions of music are never specific and are often naïve and fanciful' (Fallon, 2002, p. 288).



and the subordination of music's technical aspects to what he saw as the expansion of music's spiritual potential' (Móricz, 2020, p. 157). Here we can make five ordered points.

1. Melody is taken as the direct presentation of a composer's individuality—it is deeply particular, signifying the kind of subjective supremacy that Maritain espouses.<sup>368</sup> In the modern 'phase,' emotion and affect are not just prime determinants in the composer's work-making imaginative matrix; they also emerge overtly *as* the work's expressive character, becoming the main way the piece is known. Whilst not restricting ourselves to this phase (as we have shown), it should follow that subjectivity is heightened (or better, interiorised) to an extreme degree if we consider melody in this context. It is a *wholly* subjective emanation of sound which reveals the reality and essence of the self and things. Lourié sees melody 'as "the primary moving force and organic essence of art," its primacy deriving from its uncanny ability to "reveal some intimate truth"' (Móricz, 2013a, p. 118) in the manner of a personal disclosure. The Thomistic precept of movement evincing knowledge permeates Lourié's manifesto,<sup>369</sup> and by affording melody such subjective depth, he echoes the Patristic saints' (and Aquinas's) veneration of liturgical song.

2. Móricz notes that melody, in Lourié's reckoning, is completely purposeless and brings creative liberation. She continues:

Melody, Lourié insisted, has infinite freedom, and it should not be restrained. Its freedom from formal constraints means that, unlike a theme or a motive that as a progression of sounds "must lead to a certain action," melody "in itself is not connected with any action and does not lead to any action." It is "a progression in which the function of the interval disappears" (Móricz, 2020, p. 158).

The assertion that melody is 'a thing in itself' (Lourié in Maritain, 1953, p. 253), separate from any other action, suggests that the relationship (intervals) between note pitches is determined neither by functional voice-leading<sup>370</sup>—the conventional resolution of one pitch to another, nor by rhythmic imperative, but by a profounder, more existential 'rule.' Poetic experience itself

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<sup>368</sup> The differences between this account and the Schopenhauerian notion of music as a direct picture (image) of the will, have been previously outlined. The divergence revolves around the nature of the intellect itself, which in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition is the illuminating, spiritual ground of all apprehension—not an image at all, but the touchstone of reality. Furthermore, the religious dimension permeates 'Lourié's concept of melody' which 'appeals not to the personal (or as he writes "sentimental"), but to the transcendental and religious spheres' (Móricz, 2013, p. 118).

<sup>369</sup> ST. I, q. 2, a. 3 being the first answer (the argument from motion) to the question of God's existence.

<sup>370</sup> It would be gross misrepresentation to interpret '*the function of the interval disappears*' as a Maritainian endorsement of serialist, or twelve-tone technique. One cannot dismiss the possibility that a melody of twelve different pitches spontaneously emerges in the poetic sense we have described, but the imposition of a system extraneous to that sense (the entire purpose of which is to determine the ordering of notes) is diametrically opposed to free *Poièsis*.

determines the shape and scope of the melodic line, and this is realised as it terminates in an arrangement of pitches, apprehended auditorily. This idea is doubtless in Maritain's mind as characterising his modern phase. In defining *motif* as 'an abortive melody' and *theme* as 'a melody at a secondary stage of its development' (Maritain, 1953, p. 253), Lourié affirms melody's pre-existence: a first source—*melody qua melody*. It is a self-sufficient, ontologically 'perfect' thing—in as far as aesthetic perfection analogises transcendental, divine perfection. Busoni, too, describes the ontological purity which should accompany the composer's apprehension of sound, stating 'The true creator strives, in reality, after *perfection only*. And through bringing this into harmony with *his own* individuality, a new law arises without premeditation' (Busoni, 1962, p. 88). A suggestion of intentionality lies in Busoni's comment, as well as a sense that the 'prudential' divide between the perfect work and the perfect person is not unqualified.

The whole matter of the arrangement of pitches is at the heart of Busoni's manifesto for musical freedom, although musicology has emphasised the technical rather than the metaphysical dimension to his polemic.<sup>371</sup> What he proposes is nothing less than the emancipation of the poetic sense, on similar terms to those by which Maritain and Lourié define melody.

So narrow has our tonal range become, so stereotyped its form of expression ... our tonal system is nothing more than a set of "signs": an ingenious device to grasp somewhat of that eternal harmony; a meagre pocket edition of that encyclopaedic work'... And so, in music, the signs have assumed greater consequence than that which they ought to stand for, and can only suggest. How important, indeed, are "third," "fifth," and "octave"! How strictly we divide "consonance" from "dissonances"—*in a sphere where no dissonance can possibly exist!* ... Yet nature created *an infinite gradation—infinite!* who still knows it nowadays? (Busoni, 1962, p. 89).

To the above, Maritain might have added *human nature*—the self, as it transfigures the things of nature in potentially infinite ways (imitating divine creation) in pure, exclamatory musical *utterance*. Busoni does not share Maritain's theological vision, but it is abundantly clear why artists gravitated to Maritain's philosophy of the work.

3. The question of nonconceptual and wholly intuitive knowing reappears, because melody, as construed by Lourié, supports Maritain's assertion about the existence and pre-eminence of

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<sup>371</sup> Erinn Knyt's comprehensive study of Busoni's musical conception (Knyt, 2010) is a case in point, but does briefly address metaphysical considerations. Busoni's theorising alludes to 'an abstract metaphysical musical language heard only through inspiration. Also bearing some resemblance to the Pythagorean or Boethian differentiation between *musica mundana*, *musica humana*, and *musica instrumentalis* ... belief in an unheard metaphysical musical language that although residing in all things and permeating all of nature, also occupies secret and unseen realms perceived through inspiration' (Knyt, 2010, p. 351).

such epistemic types. The elements of harmony and rhythm having been relegated to a more intellectual, conceptual and less poetic role in the genesis of a work,<sup>372</sup> melody alone remains ‘inaccessible to the logic of consciousness’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 253). It is beyond the judicial range of reason—that is, in its logical working; though we are now contemplating melody’s proximity to the illuminating rule of absolute reason itself. ‘The Scholastic Doctors,’ Maritain states, ‘insistently teach that the intellect has primacy in the work of art. They never stop reminding us that *the first principle of all human works is reason*’ (Maritain, 1962, p.49); and the trajectory of Augustine’s inquiry in *De musica*, orients the apprehension of sound and aesthetic beauty towards reason and spiritual beauty (ultimately, the beatific vision). In *Art and Scholasticism* Maritain, following Aquinas, does likewise, proposing an intimate spiritual association between non-discursive reason, the apprehension of beauty, and emotive expression: ‘In the presence of a beautiful work, as I have already pointed out, the intellect rejoices without discourse’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 57).<sup>373</sup>

This begins to address the critique by Umberto Eco, which fundamentally questions the chronology of such divinatory experiences. (Eco, 1988, pp. 190-201). It is not overreach or an unwarranted progression beyond strict Thomism to interpret melody as the ‘beautiful’ evidence of reason—a form of divination in sound and sense which arises in the preconscious life of the intellect. As melody *radiates*, reason joyfully *hears*. However, if we were to follow Eco’s interpretation of Aquinas literally, insisting that aesthetic apprehension ‘comes to birth as a culmination and completion of intellectual knowledge’ (Eco, 1988, p. 200), then melody must be a formulation of pitches determined not prior, but subsequent to a conceptual formation of the work and abstractive judgement thereof. Maritain and Lourié claim the opposite.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> The influence of Busoni comes across strongly in this designation. In his *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*, Busoni classifies ‘rhythm, harmony, intonation, part-leading and the treatment of themes’ as ‘technics’ (Busoni, 1962, p. 86), and connects them to the uniquely functional German term ‘*musikalisch*’ (p. 85). It is probable that Lourié was familiar with Busoni’s radical essay, first published in 1907, but unlike the well-documented association between Maritain and Stravinsky, there is no direct link from Maritain to Busoni.

<sup>373</sup> John Trapani highlights that whilst Maritain never uses the word ‘poetry’ in *Art and Scholasticism*, the notion is latent in the text. ‘Only in sense knowledge do we “possess perfectly ... the intuitiveness required for the perception of beauty.... [It] delights the intellect through the senses and through their intuition”’ (Trapani, 2000, p. 15). Melody, for Maritain and Lourié in *Creative Intuition*, is clearly the highest artistic embodiment of this ‘perfect possession.’

<sup>374</sup> To extend Eco’s argument, the apprehension of melody should be understood as the cessation of conceptual knowledge—a stage of reflective contemplation and delight; whereas for Maritain, melody should be interpreted as an intuitive and dynamic expression that directly emerges prior to any other knowledge. Charles Ives pragmatically ‘sits on the fence’ over this question; unable to decide whether ‘inspiration can arise through no external stimuli of sensation or experience,’ that is to say, whether ‘even subconscious images can be separated from some human experience—there must be something behind subconsciousness to produce

4. After proposing melody's essential irrationality,<sup>375</sup> it is natural that Lourié views this situation as a condition of musical timelessness—the suspension of space and duration. Melody is ‘a liberation in spirit from the chains of spacial and temporal limitations’ (Lourié, 1929 in Moricz, 2020, p. 157). It gives an ‘illusion of being a stopped instant, and so gives the impression of belonging to the category of the eternal’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 253). Melody is invested with transcendental and religious significance, evoking even the song of *The Apocalypse*—the eternal “Sanctus,” and in ruling that ‘aesthetic experience became a surrogate for spiritual experience a long time ago’—a sideswipe at Wagner—Lourié (1928, p. 168) sees in melody the best hope of reversing the trend.

It is almost an obligatory example, but the suspension of temporal laws is the very stuff of Olivier Messiaen's declamatory ‘Louange à l'éternité de Jésus,’ the fifth movement of his *Quatuor de la fin du temps* of 1943 (Ex. 5, in Appendix. 1). Each compositional detail, down to the performance marks in the score, represents infinitude, and expresses the condition of timelessness—actually *the* divine personification of timelessness, in a cello melody of visceral intensity. We will not analyse the work in detail, noting only its expressive clarity and the almost complete subservience of rhythm to melodic declamation. Employing only the higher reaches of the cello, the melody is cast in the manner of a soprano *vocalise*—a wordless song—with minimal rhythmic variance. Messiaen's own brief comments on the movement invoke the prologue to John's Gospel—the music, ‘infinitely slow, magnifies with love and reverence the eternity of this powerful and gentle Word, ‘which the years can never efface’ (Pople, 2012, p. 53). The piano part, having been reduced to one note value played at an extraordinarily slow tempo, is entirely rhythmless, and the elements of space and duration are nearly dissolved, as intensity and tone colour become the primary means of expression. The pitches themselves, derived solely from Messiaen's own modal language, epitomise subjectivity (liberated from the traditional divisions that Busoni rails against) and they accentuate the melody's ontological

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consciousness, and so on’ (Ives, p. 108). Ives, though, does acknowledge the human person's ability to innately perceive beauty in the abstract, thus harbouring the potential for inspiration without prior stimuli.

<sup>375</sup> Lourié's choice of the word ‘irrational’ is unfortunate because it is open to misinterpretation, or connoting misleading impressions of an anarchic, even aleatoric approach to composition, whereas the very opposite is true. The music could *not* be any other way, and melody, therefore, is possibly better described as *definitively* rational or *supra-rational*. Klara Móricz highlights Lourié's claim ‘that because of its irrational nature, melody is frequently censored, “developed,” “arranged,” or “simply ‘accompanied.’” Even worse, it is “submitted to artificial deformation and mechanization and reduced . . . to strict subordination to other elements, particularly rhythm.” Contemporary melody, Lourié wrote, “is grotesque, grimacing, compounded of irony and buffoonery”’ (Móricz, 2020, p. 158).

primacy.<sup>376</sup> He doesn't state it outright, but in the comment below, which opens his chapter on Melody in *The Technique of My Musical Language*, Messiaen nearly ascribes to melody the transcendental name of beauty.

Supremacy to melody! The noblest element of music, may melody be the principal aim of our investigation. Let us work melodically; rhythm remains pliant and gives precedence to melodic development, the harmony chosen being the “true,” that is to say, wanted by the melody and the outcome of it (Messiaen, 1944, p. 31).

For Lourié and Messiaen, Melody—more than any element—signifies the consummation of the temporal in the eternal. Once more, the influence of Augustine is palpable. At risk of two glaring contradictions, we might offer, firstly, the music just described as an outstanding ‘programmatic’ depiction not just of John 1:1, but of the end of *The Confessions* (Augustine, 1932, pp. 347-348). ‘In eternity’ as Lourié states, ‘there is no longer time’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 253). Paradoxically, though, in the cessation of temporal elements is there not also the cessation of what was *previously* known conceptually, as Eco might well claim? Our dilemma about the hierarchy of knowing just keeps returning.

5. With Messiaen, we have just inferred that melody brings transcendental values to the fore in a specifically religious sense. In the passage that follows, ‘Lourié’s defense of melody is thus not a nostalgia for the nineteenth century. It is a plea to reestablish music’s ability to express ideas and spiritual strivings much beyond itself’ (Móricz, 2020, p. 158).

Our melodic gift is in direct ratio to our capacity for good, not in the sentimental but in the religious sense. . . . Melody in itself is a primary good, a sort of purification through repentance [confession]. It translates the unadulterated [nondisfigured] essence of what is, and not the inventions [any lie] of the author. The quality of a melody is thus dependent exclusively upon the categories of moral and esthetic unity, and on nothing else. (Lourie, 1929, in Moricz, 2020, p. 158).<sup>377</sup>

Melody (*qua* melody) is a good in itself, and thus it must be ‘an expression of the truth of the one who produces it’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 253). Melody is truthful because of the unimpaired congruence between notes that are formed and the one forming them. Of course, this is the apex to which melody aspires, and as we have repeatedly found, Maritain seldom presents us with anything other than a paradigm. (The musician desires the good, but will not attain it by

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<sup>376</sup> Pople (2012, pp. 57-63) examines the music’s modal construction in detail, noting that Messiaen construed the modes’ harmonic potential as ‘an atmosphere,’ which in this case, contains E major almost secondarily.

<sup>377</sup> The bracketed words are from Maritain’s translation of the latter (1936) publication of Lourié’s essay. They provide a far more lucid, Classical, sense of the qualities of the transcendentals themselves: *disfiguration* ruling out beauty, and *lie* connoting the inversion of truth. The semantic distinction between *confession* and *repentance* is also subtle, but important to note; the former not necessarily implying the latter.

default). It appears, too, that the ontology of the *poetic-melodic* sense—its genesis in the subjective, preconscious life of the intellect, as Maritain proposes—also witnesses to the collusion of art and prudence. The virtues and ways of artistry do not possess a separate existence, or in some way prise the person apart from their own moral life. They are grafted onto the common root of the practical intellect, sharing with the speculative intellect the same power of the soul—that is, reason itself. If melody is a direct growth from this, then it is indeed a musical first thing.

Perhaps the most thought-provoking element of Maritain and Lourié’s manifesto is its cathartic inference. Melody is construed not only as disclosive, but purgative. This returns us to Aquinas’s commentary on the Psalms and ‘the exaltation of the mind bursting into voice.’<sup>378</sup> We have noted the sentences adjacent to this depiction of ecstatic utterance—that it is preceded by confession and succeeded by soliloquy. If understood as a single, unified melodic exclamation in three modes (confession, exaltation, soliloquy), then inherent in melody is exactly the primal, confessional, and entirely good emergence of sound that Maritain and Lourié describe. St. Thomas infers this, stating ‘a soliloquy is the conversation of man with God one to one, or speaking within himself alone, *because this suits one who praises*,<sup>379</sup> and one who prays’ (Aquinas, 2012, *Proemium*). Hymns or melodies are the confessional monologues of the Prophet David, and this is the subjective, melodic archetype. Thus, in this profoundly spiritual analogy, subjectivity and interiority inhere to melody: and in the poetic realm, melodic utterance is ‘confessional’ as well as jubilant.<sup>380</sup>

### ***Concerning ‘The Score’***

There is, though, a flaw in one of Maritain’s comments about melody. Writing that ‘poetic experience, through the motion it involves, terminates “in an arrangement of words on paper,” or of notes on a score, or of colours on a canvas, is of itself a sort of natural contemplation, obscure and affective, and implies a moment of silence and alert receptivity’ (Maritain, 1953, pp. 254-255), Maritain again meets his musical ‘blind spot.’ Poetic experience evidently terminates in the work produced, but the musical work is different in its termination to works

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<sup>378</sup> In the chapter *Musical Beauty, God and the Church: Historical-Ecclesiological Contexts*, we noted the element of personal disclosure in the various commentaries on the Psalms, as they related to liturgical song.

<sup>379</sup> Italics added.

<sup>380</sup> In Peter Schaffer and Milos Forman’s motion picture *Amadeus* (1984) the sacrament of penance is directly evoked in this sense, except as it concerns the experience of the listener. On hearing Mozart’s music, Salieri ‘confesses’ (to a priest) ‘I heard the music of true forgiveness filling the theater, conferring on all who sat there, perfect absolution.’

of poetry and painting. In the latter, words and colours are what elicit apprehension in the reader or viewer; in music the score does not. It is in the hearing through which aesthetic experience (however this is construed) ensues. The use of the word 'silence' in the context of contemplation, however, does reveal awareness of this.

This simple slip by Maritain may ultimately prove insignificant philosophically, but what is at stake is our understanding of the apprehension of sound, of musical beauty; and in the context of such a detailed account of artistry as is *Creative Intuition*, it is oddly imprecise. (There is no species of *number* in Augustine given to sound written on a page). To be very critical of Maritain, even the division between poetry and painting is not clearly enough drawn, as strictly, poetic knowledge *in poetry* relies not on the visual sense, but the auditory.

### III – Another encounter with Robert Schumann

It would be a more simple task to employ musical examples drawn from twentieth century works. Subjectivity and individual style inhabit this period more than ever previously, to the extent that each work possesses an idiosyncratic autonomy separate to other works by the same composer. Any of the notable violin concertos of the period—by Jean Sibelius, Alban Berg, Béla Bartók, could suffice to underscore a Maritainian account of melodic declamation. But having already proposed Robert Schumann as the first musical *poet* of Maritain's modern epoch, we should return to him to continue testing the range of poetic knowledge as it concerns the musician. We shall also remain, for now, thematically centred on melody.

The poetic sense, Maritain states (redeeming himself from his previous imprecision) gives the poem 'its very being and existence,' and the poetic sense is inseparable from 'the verbal form it animates from within, from the whole fabric of words it causes to exist' (Maritain, 1953, p. 258). He now gives full credence to the poetic sense imparted by the *sonorous* qualities of the words alone—the physicality and emotive resonance of the words, which is as crucial to the apprehension of poetry as the images, associations and feelings they convey. Yes, the words are signs, but they are so much more. A striking transference between poetry and music ensues, the import of which is vital as we re-engage with Schumann.<sup>381</sup>

[The poetic sense is] a meaning which is immanent in that object which is the poem or consubstantial with it, and which the reader intuitively perceives ... It might be said that the poetic sense is the inner

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<sup>381</sup> It is all the more pertinent to return to Schumann as Maritain prefixes his own and Lourié's remarks about melody with Schumann describing his own work as 'a poem; that is belongs to the world of the spirit' and which 'stems from the consciousness of the poetic mind' (Schumann in Maritain, 1953, p. 251).

melody—perceptible to the mind, not to the ear—of the poem, for in music also the melody is the native, pure and immediate life force—this time perceptible to the ear—of poetic intuition, the poetic sense of the musical work (Maritain, 1953, p. 258).

The key phrase ‘perceptible to the ear’ places the auditory ‘intellect’ as the true *vehicle* of musical apprehension. This is the first time in the entire text of *Creative Intuition* that the notion of musical meaning—the obsession of post-enlightenment musical aesthetics—has arisen. It is defined by Maritain: the poetic sense *is* the meaning of the work.<sup>382</sup>

Earlier, we offered an interpretation of Schumann’s ‘Warum?’ which attempted to strike a balance between musicological commentary that was not overly technical, and aesthetic reflection that stepped back from exhaustive Thomistic scrutiny. In this, we have followed the approach of *Creative Intuition*—revolving around the genesis of the work. Maritain’s words summarise our task: ‘The intelligible sense (the logical sense) through which the poem utters ideas, is entirely subordinate to the poetic sense, through which the poem exists,’ and is ‘only one of the elements or components of the poetic sense’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 259).

### ***Beyond Eusebius: What Does ‘Des Abends’ Mean?***

The *Fantasiestücke*, Op.12 commences with the evocatively titled ‘Des Abends’ (Ex. 6, in Appendix. 1) meaning ‘Eventide.’ (The title, we recall, was added post-composition). Its melodic line is long and sinewy in character, weaving a chromatically-inflected ‘vocalise’ above and around an accompaniment of delicate fragility. The first sixteen bars say it all.<sup>383</sup> Could such music’s poetic sense even be separated from its logical, more intelligible components? One can see why Maritain did not try.<sup>384</sup> Problems abound, especially in the absence of any verbal ‘markers’ of the work’s poetry (except the performance direction ‘Sehr innig zu spielen’<sup>385</sup>), making our effort to voice what is only ‘heard’ all the more difficult. Attempting to convey a *semiotic-semantic* reality via the relationships between sounds, spaces,

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<sup>382</sup> One can appreciate how Kivy and, to an extent, Scruton, come to reject the search for musical meaning as futile, when they fundamentally deny the metaphysical and spiritual basis of the poetic sense itself.

<sup>383</sup> The score is reproduced in Appendix 1.

<sup>384</sup> Maritain’s excuse for not suggesting musical examples—‘comparisons are always risky’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 269)—comes across as rather inadequate.

<sup>385</sup> *To be played very inwardly and intimately*. In the Preface to the 2004 Henle Edition of the score, the editor notes that ‘the first half of 1837 was not a very happy period in Schumann’s life. [Schumann] himself called it “his darkest hour”’ (Herttrich, 2004, p. 5). Perrey (2011, p. 16) notes that ‘for much of the 1830’s’ Schumann ‘lives at the mercy of spells of intense anxiety and panic attacks that at once generate and result in his tentative approach to life.’ On one hand, this has little bearing on our experience of the work; but on the other, the manner and extent to which such situations (of the self and things) have entered into a work of such apparent serenity becomes rather more important.



intervals and the familiar musical elements, must, in all honesty involve recognition of the interplay between the intelligible and the poetic sense.

Maritain is aware of this dilemma, noting in a very nuanced observation that complete obscurity, without any intelligible or logical sense, is impossible. Poetry is not divinely self-referential; rather it connotes ‘the universality of being and beauty, perceived each time in a singular existence,’ with some degree of logical meaning, however small, existing not to ‘communicate ideas’ but to ‘maintain contact with the universe of intuitivity’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 259). This reflects Schumann’s own diary entry about the ‘lyrical commonplaces’ of his contemporaries, the highest (intelligible) levels of which do not even reach the point of departure for his own works. (Maritain, 1953, p. 251). By the same token, as Schumann also infers, no work can be fully clear—that is, relying only on the intelligible or logical sense. In the apprehension of a work, Maritain maintains that in a poem there will be grades of clarity and obscurity, but there remains a category of obscurity that is more impenetrable, more unspeakable—obscure *in essence*. In this scenario, the words are ‘dislocated, flexible and transparent instruments of intuitive emotion’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 262). How much more so, then, wordless sounds.

‘Des Abends’ has a dreamy balletic quality (the ‘Eusebius’ of Schumann’s personality), with a sparse keyboard texture maintained by an unbroken, flowing melody and its accompaniment. The first sixteen bars unquestionably establish the work’s melodic pre-eminence, but not in the perfunctory manner of separated melodic and harmonic layers.<sup>386</sup> Our initial experience of the work, as performer or listener, is of unified lyrical utterance—every component at the service of the work’s ‘song.’ The melody flows inexorably, back and forth (in ‘*Lied Ohne Worte*’ style) with a preponderance of consecutive pitches, in a single, uninterrupted breath. Those moments where the line is modified by intervals wider than a second, feel, somehow, acutely significant to the phrasing—a primary apprehension of how the music ‘*is*.’ They are almost all thirds (from bar 2 to 3, from 4 to 5, in bar 10, from bar 11 to 12, and so on), but they ‘gesturally’ aim towards the two perfect 4ths in bars 12 and 13.

The second section (bars 17-24) is very revealing. The underlying harmony is an extended dominant 7th in D flat major, modified in bar 18 by a diminished chord on B double flat—a note which wants to go somewhere, but doesn’t. The phrasing appears straightforward—two 4-bar phrases, with one answering the other in classical style. But the music is not so simple.

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<sup>386</sup> In this respect, a performer immediately encounters the difficulties of practicing each hand separately.

The non-harmony notes in bars 18 and 22 are conspicuous; their origins being in the first sixteen bars of the piece, where the melody contains more non-chord notes than chord notes (by some margin), forming momentary and tense dissonances with adjacent or harmony notes. This particularly manifests to the performer (whose hands are closely bound), and to the listener, aware of the rather unsettling harmonic palette. The climax of the first section in bar 12 is especially intense.<sup>387</sup> We also hear something of the fundamentally strained relationship between the tonic note (Db) and the tritone away from it (G), which is echoed in bars 17-18 between the dominant (Ab) and its tritone (D).<sup>388</sup>

Melodic, metric and rhythmic ambiguities abound.<sup>389</sup> The time signature, extraordinarily, is 2/8, but we might ‘hear’ a number of possibilities: perhaps overtly, a three-in-a-bar based on the melodic line and the right hand subdivisions of it. Maybe the left hand in compound time; or a simple time signature with triplets? The ear catches it all. Bars 21-24 are even more paradoxical, as the quaver melody, now internalised within the accompaniment, is pushed forward by one semiquaver, leaving a quaver just before the bar line (which clearly should be sounded into the next bar). The moment feels disconcerting—the time signature and bar lines appearing an unnecessary imposition.<sup>390</sup> From a performer’s perspective, it is easiest to imagine the piece without either, or as an unbroken, unconstrained melodic line. Rosen interprets these bars as use of ‘*temps dérobé*’ (written out *rubato*), albeit acknowledging that Schumann’s use of a customary performance technique is ‘structural in a more profound sense’ (1998, p. 37) than the term *rubato* suggests.<sup>391</sup> However, the very ambiguity of voice-leading and

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<sup>387</sup> ‘Music that is as tonal in its organisation as Schumann may be sprinkled with notes [‘outside’ tones] that are ruled out by the old laws of harmony.’ (Scruton, 1997, p. 273). The juxtaposition of C flat and B flat (a non-chord note), and their adjacent proximity to Ab in bar 12 is a case in point.

<sup>388</sup> The tritone, or augmented fourth interval traditionally represents an extreme of disharmony—the antithesis of consonance, whether sounded melodically or harmonically (together).

<sup>389</sup> In his very prescriptive performance guide, Hinson (1992, p. 8) merely suggests that ‘the duple meter is made to sound like triple,’ without questioning the ambiguity this presents (or represents) in the slightest.

<sup>390</sup> Here, I offer a more flexible interpretation of *Des Abends*’ aural paradoxes than Scruton’s rather forced analysis of an extract from Schumann’s Fourth Symphony, where the dominance of a three-in-a-bar metre is severely underestimated (Scruton, 1997, p. 187). ‘Metrical intuitions’ are one component of Scruton’s attempt at a ‘Generative Theory of Tonal Music’, but, following the predominant thrust of music philosophy, his commentary is oriented to an idealised listener, rather than to the creative imperative of the composer. Maritain’s remark in *Art and Poetry*, p. 97, that it is an ontological failure which explains ‘certain errors of philosophers who demand for their philosophy the privileges of a knowledge reserved to the composer’ is a perceptive critique of just such a situation. Musical analysis does not traditionally begin with metaphysics.

<sup>391</sup> See Rosen, C. (1998, pp. 33-38). The examples offered by Rosen to illustrate ‘*temps dérobé*’, in keyboard works by Mozart and Haydn, may just as readily be analysed as idiosyncratic, syncopated juxtapositions of melody and accompaniment, equally evident in their orchestral music, and little to do with pianistic ‘*rubato*’. Equally, the necessarily complex pedalling, and pedalling choices required of the pianist, further demonstrate the work’s lyrical, poetic freedom.

paradoxical metrical displacement suggests that the work—in its *imaginary* and *verbal* sounds, is already at the frontier of comprehensible scoring. Classical forms and ‘lyrical commonplaces’ (Schumann, 1824 in Maritain, 1953, p. 251) were insufficient to engender a work of sheer perceptual imagination. Familiar conventions had become an awkward framework on which to hang an expression of lyrical freedom, interiority and fragility. So what did Schumann sense, and what does the piece mean, in the way of something immanent and perceptible to the mind?

We are conscious that many aspects of this brief reading of ‘Des Abends’ contradict the edict that exegesis, analysis and logic cannot be employed in apprehending a work’s melodic genesis—the aesthetic experience of its *poetry* and *meaning*. But it is the work’s perceptible (intelligible) *and* subliminal (supra-rational) ‘dissonance’ which together mark the melodic poetry of the of the piece.<sup>392</sup> “How?” not “what?” does the music “mean,” is a better question to ask. Others may take a different view, but it does appear that melody, as a subjective, interior and disclosive expression of the composer’s ‘soul’ is a promising start to an answer.

If Schumann related these poems to the conflicts within his own life, then the fact that he prominently or pervasively employed metrical dissonance when setting them suggests that he consciously or subconsciously linked that device with his personal conflicts. It is not far-fetched to assume that in Schumann’s instrumental music, too, metrical dissonances frequently represent the conflicts he was working through in his life.

Schumann was, even more than most artists, riven by internal conflicts ... We can never, of course, be certain precisely what Schumann might have “meant” by particular instances ... We shall not be far off the mark, however, if we interpret them as representing inner or outer conflict, and their resolutions as expressing a desire to come to terms with conflict ... for in his music, unlike in his life, Schumann was able to resolve all conflicts if he so wished (Krebs, 1999, p. 172).

And this sustains the assertion that in the composer, poetic knowledge and the desire and means for utterance, is indeed stronger and more liberated than in the poet (bound by verbal declamation). It is also definitively stronger and freer than the formal conventions and temporal trappings of musical vocabularies.<sup>393</sup> Robert Schumann, lastly, is confirmed as the first

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<sup>392</sup> In his imaginative treatise in the form of a dialogue between Schumann’s projected personae, Florestan and Eusebius, Harald Krebs (1999) asserts metrical dissonance to be a defining feature of Schumann’s music, and one that banishes the rigid analytic separation of musical elements, especially meter and rhythm. It is a moot point whether such a precise ‘decoding’ of the relationship between biographical instances and their assigned musical ‘resolutions’ is warranted. A degree of non-specificity is surely required.

<sup>393</sup> In the chapter ‘A Thomistic Philosophy of Music: Conceivable and Essential’, we noted that Paul Hindemith posited the existence of a primordial musical experience, where ‘the first conscious apperception of a musical impression did not permit any reference to former ones’ (Hindemith (1952, p. 22). In the composers we

Maritainian ‘artifex’ of the modern epoch—a poet-musician with a distinctly emotive *and* metaphysical *modus operandi*.

#### IV – Another kind of life which is free

Having taken a thematic detour, we return to our more sequential appraisal of *Creative Intuition*, to form a conclusion about the second main portion of Maritain’s text. It is now proposed by Maritain, following St. Thomas, that ‘imagination proceeds or flows from the essence of the soul through the intellect [reason], and that the external senses [also] proceed from the essence of the soul through imagination. For they [the external senses] exist in man to serve imagination, and through imagination, intelligence’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 107).<sup>394</sup> This is the fundamental nature and order of emanation, and Maritain depicts this in a useful visual illustration below.

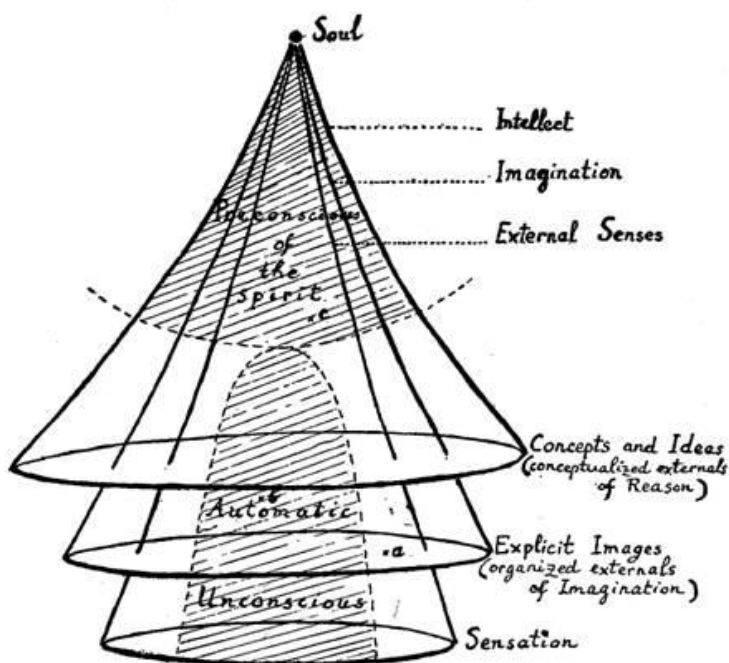
What is vital to note is the general shape, and way in which poetic knowledge is interpreted and structured. The ‘life and activity of ‘the Intellect or Reason’ ... of Imagination ... of the External Senses’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 109) are not to be viewed in isolation, and neither is one empty of another. A vast dynamism is implied, upwards and downwards; and in this way, the external senses are both the initiator (things entering the self) and the termination of the intellect and the imagination. What the diagram also shows, is that in closest proximity to the soul, the intellect, imagination and senses are *all* hidden together in the preconscious.

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turned to, intuitive-perceptual apprehension of a work’s expressive character always prefigures the overall design of a piece, its changes of tempo and mode, rhythmic character, texture, degrees of activity and so on.

<sup>394</sup> Maritain refers to ST. I, q. 77, a. 4 and 6. Sean Sullivan also summarises Maritain’s thesis to this point by reminding us of the common root shared by poetic and speculative knowledge.

*[P]oetry, a kind of intuitive knowledge, originates as intellectual in the preconscious of the spirit in virtue of the exercise of the intellectus agens. Poetry as a kind of intellection is unique. But the difference between speculative knowledge and poetic knowledge is not due to a difference in the radical powers of intelligence operating to produce one or the other ... it is due to a difference in what is presented to the active power ... in the case of poetic knowledge, it is principally emotion – ‘spiritualised’ or ‘intentional’ emotion, which, by the same active power of intelligence, becomes the formally determining cause of intellection (Sullivan, 1963, p. 72).*



We are detecting that Thomistic aesthetics has taken a hitherto untrammelled approach—in trying to determine the absolute heart of artistic creation, and no longer relying on scholastic theorising. It seems too coincidental that Maritain's illustration most readily translates to the conception of a musical work and the emanation of sound. Nor is it fanciful to imagine Augustine's species of number (classes of sound) depicted in some similar way (once again, poetic knowledge referencing its transcendental analogate), or various accounts of composers illustrated likewise.<sup>395</sup>

The freedom of the creative spirit, therefore, begins 'in this root life where the powers of the soul are common' (Maritain, 1953, p. 111); where totality and integrity, as well as deep subjectivity and self-disclosure, will be the hallmarks of true musical creation and apprehension. They proceed from the unity of the whole human person, whereupon 'the first obligation imposed on the poet [composer] is to consent to be brought back to the hidden place, near the centre of the soul, where this totality exists in the state of a creative source' (Maritain, 1953, p.111). 'On this accounting,' Trapani (2011, p. 82) states, 'Poetic knowing and the totality of human nature and personal experiences are unified,' and on these core terms, Schumann can justifiably be termed 'Herald of a New Poetic Age' (Daverio, 1997).

<sup>395</sup> It should have previously been noted that we have consulted almost all the composers who have contributed to the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures in Poetry at Harvard University, since Stravinsky in 1947.

Here it will be helpful to summarise the current situation. Much of our inquiry in the present and previous chapter is distilled by John Trapani in four useful, brief statements.

[T]he poet's knowledge is fed through: (a) the intentionality of concepts; (b) the formality or intentionality of the emotions and love; (c) the dark vigorous waters of the senses, dreams, and imagination; and (d) the host of psychological complexities which, taken together, constitutes a person's Self, an intellectual and emotional life that is often obscure to itself (Trapani, 2011, p. 82).

Maritain is contemplating the existence of an 'inherent knowledge' that is 'immanent in and *consubstantial* with poetry, one with its very essence' (Maritain, 1953, p. 112). A knowledge that pre-empts and absorbs all other forms, knowledge that is *definitively* preconceptual or nonconceptual—one that is *knowledge in act*.<sup>396</sup>

### ***The Divine and Human Reality of Things and Self***

It is unsurprising that Maritain 'looks' at creative intuition by looking at God—it is a pattern well established, and one we have tried to imitate; but now it is robustly and vividly affirmed.

And that which will be expressed or manifested in the things made is nothing else than their Creator Himself, whose transcendent Essence is enigmatically signified in a diffused, dispersed, or parcelled-out manner, by works which are deficient likenesses of and created participations in it. And God's Intellect is determined or specified by nothing else than His own essence (Maritain, 1953, p. 112).

God's creative idea is only and purely 'formative and forming' and creation itself is deemed a poetic act. This is surely a crucial, foundational component to a theological aesthetic of musical beauty. Maritain sees in God's knowledge of Himself 'an act of intellection which is His very Essence and His very Existence, that He knows His works ... And such is the supreme analogate of poetry' (Maritain, 1953, p. 113). Leonard Bernstein, in his own colourful way, narrates his (surprisingly Thomistic) version of this analogate:

The Bible tells us the whole creation story not only verbally, but in terms of verbal creation. God *said*: Let there be light. God *said*: Let there be a firmament. He created verbally. Now can you imagine God *saying*, just like that, "Let there be light," as if ordering lunch? ... I've always had a private fantasy of God *singing* those two blazing words: *Y'HI—O-O-O-R!* Now that could really have done it; music could have caused light to break forth ... what I've created is simply heightened speech, which would seem to corroborate yet another cliché about music beginning where language leaves off (Bernstein, 1976, p. 16).

We have determined that 'the mind bursting forth into voice' is hardly a cliché. The notion has a long and distinguished theological-ecclesiological heritage which we are now directly

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<sup>396</sup> It is around this hypothesis that the critiques of Maritain's intuitive approach cohere.

implicating in our understanding of the poetic sense and poetic knowledge. Poetry is ‘engaged in the free creativity of the spirit,’ it is ‘an intellective act which is not formed by things, but is by its own essence, formative and forming,’ and something is ‘formed into being, instead of being formed by things’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 144). There are provisos, however. The poet is not God; for their creative intuition relies upon external forms and things which they themselves have not formed. The poet is caught between two worlds—the extraneous elements (things) and their own substance (the self), precisely because they are *not* God. However, subjectivity is afforded great dignity, by virtue of Divine creation being the highest analogate of poetry.<sup>397</sup>

To capture the theological import of Maritain’s ‘poetic epistemology’ in a single sentence is well-nigh impossible; but an attempt is needed. The *imago Dei*, seen in the person, is realised not only conceptually, but actually caught in the *poesis* of humanity; and music—especially melody, as we have interpreted it—is a lofty demonstration.

All that the composer discerns and divines in things, ‘he discerns and divines not as something *other* than himself, according to the law of speculative knowledge, but, on the contrary, as inseparable from himself and from his emotion, and in truth as identified with himself’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 115). Recognising both the *divinatory* property of intuition, and the profoundly divine realities emulated in human *poesis*, we may confidently apply a basic definition of poetic knowledge to music. Musical knowledge and intuition, first, arises from the spiritual unconscious (preconscious); it is a knowledge through identification or connaturality (congeniality); it grasps obscurely the reality of self and things; and lastly, it bears fruit *only* in sound—ultimately a work.

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<sup>397</sup> ‘Subjectivity in its deepest ontological sense ... is the substantial totality of the human person, a universe unto itself, which the spirituality of the soul makes capable of containing itself through its own immanent acts, and which, at the centre of all the subjects that it knows as objects, grasps only itself as subject. In a way similar to that in which divine creation presupposes the knowledge God has of His own essence, poetic creation presupposes, as a primary requirement, a grasping, by the poet of his own subjectivity, in order to create’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 113). The contrast with Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean conceptions is evident. For Schopenhauer, music is *the* language of the will, wherein the imagination is stimulated ‘to give form to this invisible and yet so actively-stirred spirit world which speaks to us’ and prompts us ‘to embody it in an analogous example.’ For Nietzsche, music ‘incites to the *symbolic intuition* of Dionysian universality,’ and it causes the symbolic image to stand forth *in its fullest significance* ... I infer the capacity of music to give birth to *myth* ...’ (All Nietzsche, 1910, p. 127). Maritain’s realist agenda shines through—some thing acquires being, not through an idealised analogue of the will, or via a reified symbol of supposedly ‘Bacchic’ origins; but in the similarity between the ontological completeness of the human person and the unqualified perfection of God. Maritain carefully distinguishes knowing ‘the self’ as an absolute, (not Christian) mystical aim, and the intuition which arises from the need to create. Even so, the aim of the poet cannot be realised except by ‘passing through the door of the knowing, as obscure as it may be, of his own subjectivity’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 114).

Trapani states that much of our vocabulary underscores ‘Maritain’s key notion of created dependence upon the causal power of the Divine *Esse* and the way in which we can find an entire universe of infinite richness in the proverbial “grain of sand,” the human person, and the entirety of God’s creation’ (Trapani, 2011, p. 85). This is richly affirmed by Olivier Messiaen in *The Technique of My Musical Language*: the composer pleading for ‘a *true* music, that is to say, spiritual, a music which may be an act of faith; a music which may touch upon all subjects without ceasing to touch upon God; an original music ...’ (Messiaen, 1944, p. 8).

### ***What is Grasped in Poetic Knowledge, and how?***

Finally, it is important to clarify exactly what Maritain proposes is the stuff of intuitive, poetic knowledge. We have recently used the term *connaturality* or *congeniality* as a way of designating a particular facet of the intuitive, direct knowing experience. It ‘calls attention to the fact that this type of knowledge is “lived,”’ (Trapani, 2011, p. 52) as well as to the nondiscursive, nonconceptual and integrative character of intuition itself. “‘What I produce is due to my understanding of music and to my sorrows,” Schubert said’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 251), and who knows what he really meant. But, if we take it—as everyone generally does—that Schubert was ‘connatured’ to sorrow, that is, he suffered it rather than ‘learned’ about it, then sorrow entered his work ‘through inclination, by looking at and consulting what [he is] and the inner bents or propensities of [his] own being’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 117).<sup>398</sup>

The sheer scope and highly integrated structure of Maritain’s text is apparent, as he returns to the very subject for which he gave a broad historical introduction (in four phases), and for which we supplied, musical instances. He is speaking, of course, of *emotion*; and the advent of the subjective in the production of a work.

Poetic knowledge, as I see it is a specific kind of knowledge through inclination or connaturality—let us say a knowledge through affective connaturality which essentially relates to the creativity of the spirit and tends to express itself in a work ... This particular kind of knowledge through connaturality comes about, I think, by means of emotion (Maritain, 1953, p. 118).<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Brackets replace the words ‘we are’ and ‘our’ respectively. Tunbridge observes that Ian Bostridge credits Schubert’s late works (everything after his diagnosis with syphilis and ‘the prospect of insanity and death’) as well as his ‘childish ones,’ with “‘the prospect of authenticity,” by which he means emotional immediacy – a direct line between feeling and expression’ (Tunbridge, 2016, p. 426). Thus, in works like *Schwanengesang*, D. 957, immediacy and inclination; intuition and connaturality, are bound together with Schubert’s gift for melodic expression, in a unified emotive apprehension of his suffering.

<sup>399</sup> ‘Poetic intuition is directed toward *concrete existence as connatural to the soul pierced by a given emotion*’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 126) is another description.



Maritain is not proposing a merely emotional or a sentimentalist theory of poetry, and he stresses that it is the intellect which *knows* (or hears): emotion does not. But feeling *is* inherent to the artist (and to us all), and therefore poetic knowledge, as it ‘proceeds from the intellect,’ does so ‘through the indispensable instrumentality of feeling’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 119). This is critically important, because it puts feeling in its place. It disconnects it from unreason and notions of ‘thrill’ or ‘arousal,’ and affords it an altogether ontological status. Emotion is also *intentional* in the Thomistic sense because it ‘carries within itself infinitely more than itself’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 121); and generally, emotion is understood as replacing conceptual knowing by truly becoming *the* causal means via which we apprehend reality.

As Trapani notes, ‘Maritain is aware of the fact that the idea of emotion being raised to the level of intelligence ... is a difficult one.’ In the one corner, Thomistic epistemology is being severely ‘strained,’ as the critiques we have cited claim; and in the other, familiar dogmas of the Cartesian revolution are being completely destabilised—emotion itself having been granted primary epistemic status.<sup>400</sup> From each side, Maritain’s thesis is audacious; but applying a ‘general concept of knowledge through connaturality to the various particular fields in which this kind of knowledge is at play’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 121) is challenging.

There are, though, several ways by which we can describe what is grasped in poetic knowledge, and better understand the means of that apprehension.

1. *Poetic knowledge is creative and cognitive.* The former in respect of the genesis of the work, the latter connoting what is apprehended by it; and the two are enfolded together.<sup>401</sup> They essentially share in the same thing. As *cognitive*, all of nature, each impression of the infinitude of existence, and every relationship the artist has with the entirety of the world becomes a ‘singular existent which resounds in the subjectivity of the poet,’ conveyed ‘in the manner of a sign’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 126).<sup>402</sup> When we relate what we feel *about* a particular work of music, or what the piece says *about* a specific thing, we identify an existent that the composer has signified, and we participate in the ‘affective resonance’ *of* the composer. As *creative*, poetic

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<sup>400</sup> By putting feeling or emotion ‘in its place,’ Maritain also *de-subliminises* the aesthetic experience; that is by affording feeling such an ontological precedence, and designating it a causal means of knowledge, the concept of an idealised sub-species of beauty (the sublime) effectively disappears. We will later mention Hans Von Balthasar’s ‘reversal’ of enlightenment doctrines of beauty, by way of a profitable comparison to Maritain’s.

<sup>401</sup> Newton-Smith notes that ‘As the fine arts have developed they have nurtured these two aspects to the point that Maritain feels they have become dangers’ (Newton-Smith, 1971, p. 144), which is why their unity is emphasised.

<sup>402</sup> Hanke (1973, pp. 52-67) provides a very detailed explication of Maritain’s understanding of signification, beginning with the scholastic definition ‘as that which represents something other than itself to a knowing power’ (Hanke, 1973, p. 52).

intuition is the ‘urge,’ the determination to create (which, as we noted in an earlier chapter, may remain virtual), and it is the normative demeanour of the artist—the composer is always ‘thinking music about music’ (Cone, 1994, p. 473). Notably, two facets of beauty are drawn into the discussion: *Integrity* relates to the *creative*, and *radiance* to the cognitive. But more of this will follow.

2. *Poetic knowledge is spiritualised emotion*. Maritain turns to a theologian; this time John of St. Thomas, whose phrase ‘love passes on the condition of the object’ Maritain translates as ‘love passes onto the sphere of the intentional means of objective grasping’ (Maritain, 1933, p. 122).<sup>403</sup> This defines the nature of the intention—it is a truly *affective* resonance (not egoistic supremacy or wilful idealisation as Nietzsche or Schopenhauer infer) which ‘brings about a union of Things with the subjectivity of the artist’ (Trapani, 2011, p. 86). This is not outlandish, for it speaks to universal human experience—and to any philosopher honest enough to admit it. John Dewey, without recourse to metaphysical or theological explanation, is nonetheless able to state: ‘Craftsmanship to be artistic in the final sense must be “loving”, it must care deeply for the subject matter upon which skill is exercised’ (Dewey, 1934, pp. 47-48). It is via music’s unique immateriality and expressive potency, that an *emotional* dialogue with oneself, uttered in a supra-rational, definitively intellectual ‘language’ (fructified in neither words nor plastic embodiment), articulates the Thing loved.<sup>404</sup>

Significant emotion, then, is the conveyor of poetic knowledge. Under the right (loving) conditions, it intervenes and permeates the ever-vigilant and receptive soul (the spiritual unconscious): it ‘descends into the living springs’ and is ‘received in the vitality of intelligence’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 122). Thus, emotion stirs up what is ‘virtually’ already preserved in the pre-conscious intellect—‘all the harvests of experience and memory ... all the universe of fluid images, recollections, associations, feelings and desires’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 122) and it becomes ripe for transfiguration. Once more, we sense an affinity with Augustine, who interrogated the existence and nature of sound preserved in the memory, as well as its relationship with other types of auditory ‘numbers,’ virtual or actual.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> In his monograph on Maritain’s aesthetics, Hanke (1973) altogether avoids referring to spiritualised emotion as a fundamentally ‘loving’ or ‘caring’ dimension of intentionality.

<sup>404</sup> Here, we cannot agree with Newton-Smith’s conclusion that of all the arts, it is poetry (as the art of the poet) which ‘most naturally resides closest to the poetic sense’ (Newton-Smith, 1971, p. 145). The entire thrust of *Creative Intuition*, from the first pages to the last, point to music as fulfilling that criteria.

<sup>405</sup> Augustine’s dialogue concerning whether ‘the number is in the sensor’ (Augustine, 2002, p. 327) without a sound striking the auditory apparatus is an important early debate in *De musica VI*, and one where his answer is not well-formed or particularly logical. The *recordabiles*, or memorial numbers are said to produce no sound,

To be clear, emotion does not descend into a deaf unconscious. On the contrary (and here we paraphrase); it is appropriate to depict emotion as being planted into the diffuse virtual ‘sound’ of the ever ‘hearing’ Intellect—a melodic germ, awaiting actuation by the intellect. And germinate it does, because of the connaturality that exists between soul and emotion; and therefore, as a consequence, *emotion remains emotion*. Our musical-intellective flash of poetic intuition, our musical *epiphany*, is ‘born in the unconscious of the spirit by means of such spiritualized emotion’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 123).<sup>406</sup> Composer and listener alike testify to the supra-affective imminence of music: especially melody.

3. *Poetic knowledge is ordered to transcendence*. Citing his own essay ‘The Freedom of Song’ in *Art and Poetry* (Maritain, 1943), Maritain poses a rhetorical question of the deepest significance.

In order that there should grow unceasingly, conforming to its law, the life of the creative spirit, it is necessary that the center of subjectivity should continuously be deepened to a point where, in suffering the things of the world and those of the soul, it awakens to itself. In following this line of reflections one would doubtlessly be led to ask whether, beyond a certain level, this progress in spirituality can continue without, under one form or another, a religious experience properly so-called that would aid the soul of the poet to quit the surface-levels (Maritain, 1953, p. 140).

In *Creative Intuition*, Maritain states explicitly that these lines, and the pages surrounding, ‘were written in relation to music’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 141). Contained also, is a passionate warning that to envisage music as we have—or to experience it thus, whilst simultaneously renouncing its epistemic proximity to Divine creation and transcendental beauty, is to invite unreason, darkness and insanity. It was, in fact, ‘the secret of Nietzsche’s disaster’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 140). The musical ramifications are laid bare in painful terms: ‘where formerly he could be moved to song, he can do nothing now ... it is not that of itself the song does not still ask to be more deeply born in him,’ but rather, separated from ‘the creative uncreated spirituality, archetype of all creative life: it is that the last partition of the heart has been attained, and the human substance consumed’ (Maritain, 1953, pp. 140-141).

The closer the musician reaches the centre of the preconscious life of the intellect in creative, poetic experience, the closer they draw to its source and summit. It is a reality to be reconciled with in the individual’s approach to their art, and for the rest of us, in the aesthetic experience

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but arise as a result of what is, at some point, heard or thought. It apparently possesses a fairly autonomous life, apart from the other types of number, although it is clear that knowledge is implicated.

<sup>406</sup> Italics added.

generally. In the part that follows, we shall immediately confront the most visible, or *audible* manifestation of music's transcendental orientation—the beautiful itself.

For now, we ponder the sequential lacuna between Robert Schumann—a rather ‘tortured’ genius who nonetheless personified in his work true spiritualised emotion—and Debussy, Schoenberg, Satie and countless other modern luminaries. Maritain is confident that whilst it is ‘the composer who in truth offers to the speculations of the philosopher a privileged experience’ (Maritain, 1943, p. 91) ... ‘none other than a maker of operas could instruct a Nietzsche by so perfectly decisive a disappointment’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 141).<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Possibly the fiercest, yet most subtle criticism Maritain ever made about Wagner (he doesn't even mention the composer by name), the two long paragraphs (Maritain, 1953, pp. 140-141) reveal an acute familiarity with *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche, 1910) and of Nietzsche's and Wagner's fundamental crisis—that the creative spirit, in order to grow and deepen, must inevitably progress towards authentic religious experience. Maritain's sentence, ‘none other than a maker of operas,’ above, leads into a brief discussion of *the Self-Centred Ego*, and this closes the second major part of *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*.

## Chapter 7

### Music and poetic knowledge: a 'separate, special analysis'

#### Part 3

The beauty of an independent and simple theme appeals to our aesthetic feelings with that directness, which tolerates no explanation, except perhaps, that of its inherent fitness and the harmony of parts, to the exclusion of any alien factor (Hanslick, 1884, pp. 72-73).

Music is notes, beautiful notes and sounds put together in such a way that we get pleasure out of listening to them, and that's all there is to it. (Leonard Bernstein)<sup>408</sup>

If this was all Leonard Bernstein had said about music, then, notwithstanding a lifetime of superlative musical artisanship, he should be considered a Thomist. How compatible his words to Aquinas's down-to-earth definition of beauty '*pulchrum est id quod visum placet*.'<sup>409</sup> Without doing injury to Aquinas, the phrase could analogously be rendered *id quod auditum placet*—which is exactly what Bernstein means. There is a striking simplicity to the sentiment, because beauty is arresting. So in a sense, that is all there is to it.

But in other ways, these statements—Bernstein's and Aquinas's—are profoundly unsatisfactory for what is left unsaid or assumed.<sup>410</sup> It seems given that the disposition of the individual is favourably receptive to beauty, indeed that this situation should be something akin to a universally valid human condition. At the start of his masterwork in theological aesthetics, Hans Urs von Balthasar offers a salutary lesson that this may not be so. Confronting the problem of beauty and modernity directly,<sup>411</sup> he emphasises that a failure to see or to seek beauty profoundly vitiates the apprehension of being itself.

Thomas [Aquinas] described Being (*das sein*) as a 'sure light' for that which exists (*das Seiende*). Will this light not necessarily die out where the very language of light has been forgotten and the mystery of

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<sup>408</sup> From the studio transcript to Bernstein's 'Young People's Concert' recorded on 18 January 1958.

<sup>409</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 27, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>410</sup> Robert Wood also finds that this description of beauty is far from helpful 'since truth also pleases,' however the characterization does stress 'a felt relation to the subject. For Aquinas, Beauty brings the appetite to rest in the object' (Wood, 1999, p. 107). The author also notes that Aquinas 'restricted perception of beauty to sight and hearing' (p. 108). Citing G.B. Phelan, Hanke (1973, p.10) notes that 'Aquinas's exact words are ... rather "*pulchra dicuntur quae visa placent*"' emphasising an extremely general and everyday experience of beauty and not a definitive statement about its constituents. Maritain, too, stresses that the phrase only 'encompasses the essentials of Beauty—as well as the misfortunes it entails' (Maritain, 1953, p. 160), and Eco (1988, p. 37) calls the phrase 'a disturbing intrusion' on account of the subjectivity it appears to introduce.

<sup>411</sup> This striking invocation of Aquinas from the foremost theologian of the post-Vatican II era presents beauty almost as a talisman to the apprehension of being. From the start of his monumental work *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, Balthasar does not refrain from denouncing the modern situation (as he sees it), wherewith the loss of beauty directly raises the possibility of choosing evil over good.

Being is no longer allowed to express itself ... the witness borne by Being becomes untrustworthy for the person who can no longer read the language of beauty (Balthasar, 1982, p. 19).

This is important, for we have asserted at length that ‘the witness borne by Being’ (especially in human proclivity to exceed sensory limits and to act entirely freely) guides us towards, and even procures, receptivity to meaningfully ordered ‘beautiful notes and sounds.’ In doing so, we stir awareness of our own existence. But Balthasar only appears to turn this on its head. It is not that he is mistrusting Being, rather, that he mistrusts the person who is anaesthetised to beauty,<sup>412</sup> and by stating this so forcefully and so early, he affords to beauty a decisive interpretive and revelatory role in its place among the transcendentals. Paraphrasing Balthasar, William Mahrt demands of liturgical melody that it be edifying, and that there is but one condition through which this can occur: ‘Beauty’ he says, ‘is the glue that holds the truth and goodness to their tasks . . . without beauty, the truth does not persuade, goodness does not compel’ (Mahrt, 2006, p. 6).<sup>413</sup> Rather than conflicting with St. Thomas, Balthasar proffers the reverse side of the same coin, and in doing so, he situates beauty front and centre of the transcendental debate. Bernstein and Aquinas provide an essential starting point (beauty is arresting) and they incite the question (under what conditions is it so?), both of which actually elevate the status of beauty. It cannot be ignored, nor is it the poor relation of the good and the true. Maritain, though, goes considerably further.

However, it is not an entirely simple matter to conjoin the beautiful to the true and the good, and neither has it always been regarded thus.<sup>414</sup> In a discussion of musical aesthetics, a general inquiry into the historic status of beauty as a transcendental property of being, would be too ambitious. But the essential differences of opinion coalesce around the ways and circumstances through which each of the transcendentals are manifested, as well as the way in which one may arise from another or be contained within another.<sup>415</sup> Convertibility is not necessarily

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<sup>412</sup> As does Shakespeare’s Lorenzo with regard to music in *The Merchant of Venice* (5. 1. 83-88). Balthasar, 1982, pp. 19-20 is practically an analogy.

<sup>413</sup> Mahrt draws attention to several texts by Josef Ratzinger which concur with this framing of musical beauty.

<sup>414</sup> Maritain (1953, p. 162) points out that Aristotle differed from Plato in omitting the beautiful in his listing of the transcendentals; but that it is entirely implicit, as it is also in Aquinas. Eco (1988, p. 39) agrees, but worries that Maritain’s elevation of beauty as the splendor or ‘radiance of all the transcendentals united’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 162), rather than placing them side by side, extends well beyond St. Thomas, and is perhaps generated by Maritain’s aesthetic-apologetic rather than historical-interpretative sympathies.

<sup>415</sup> Umberto Eco’s outstanding historical overview (Eco, 1988, pp. 20-48) is centred around Aquinas, and the degree to which he accepted beauty as a transcendental. Key texts are situated in the contexts of the influences on Aquinas, and the subsequent development of his thought. Eco concludes that the matter is ‘filled with uncertainties and hesitations,’ but that Aquinas ‘did believe that beauty was a transcendental, a constant property of being’ (Eco, 1988, p. 47), albeit he expressed it in a deeply pragmatic and reserved way.

straightforward. It is vital to state the overall precept that ‘beauty is distinguished by its relation to an apprehender’ (Murphy, 1995, p. 213)—that is, an experience of beauty is qualitatively *epiphanic*. It is therefore unsurprising that St. Thomas places beauty in the category of knowledge and intellectual cognition, whereas the good is an objective (of perfection) attained by desire or appetite. The apex of the good is God, which affords it the status of a transcendental. The person desires what God is.

In some ways, beauty is the inverse. It is ‘unattainable’ exactly because it just appears from outside of desire or appetite; yet it manifests as a human need and the fulfilment of pleasure. Beauty, as Maritain reminds us, is also the true and final aim of the artist, who in making a work, is aware of the paradox that it cannot be procured or ‘conjured’ into being.<sup>416</sup> Even so, to classify beauty outside of the province of desire or appetite appears not entirely precise, but its essential character remains clear: ‘Beauty makes us delighted in the very act of knowing—a delight which overflows from the thing this act attains’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 161); which is exactly what Bernstein and Aquinas mean, and what Hanslick also means (but could get no further with).

Despite the immediacy of the experience of beauty, it is prudent to approach the subject indirectly, and this is what we have done in the present thesis. So many statements about beauty, serious and anecdotal, say something about it without really saying what it is. We recall from St. Augustine that reason is the signature of beauty in the things of sense—an indirect, even covert reference to beauty amidst the weighty matter of the ascent to divine reason, and the submission of sensory experience to reason.<sup>417</sup> On these grounds aesthetic beauty or delight is accepted in as far as reason admits the experience. It is an almost ancillary definition of beauty, but crucial to our inquiry, one that is given in the context of musical sound. At the culmination of the same work, Augustine concludes that whilst beautiful sounds can never fully satisfy,<sup>418</sup> on account of their temporality and corporality, they are nonetheless beautiful in their own right—an endorsement of matter and Being. Again, beauty is defined indirectly, by virtue of its

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<sup>416</sup> This distinctly Maritainian statement emphasises the view that the fine arts—and by extension the fine artisan—is the milieu where the sole aim is nothing other than beauty. As Hanke (1933, p. 37), citing Maritain, puts it: ‘And beauty demands more despotically, not to be “produced as an object of making, but to be loved, and mirrored in the work.”’ Maritain might have objected to beauty being characterised as despotic.

<sup>417</sup> ‘It is one thing to accept or reject ... and this is done in the delight ... and another thing to appraise whether they delight rightly or not, and this is done by reasoning’ (Augustine, 2002, p. 350). This underscores the emphasis on Christian Antiquity as foundational to the present thesis.

<sup>418</sup> An idea that lies behind many of the suspicions about music held by various church authorities over the centuries.

connection with something else: in this case, striving to attain (by imitation) the constancy and eternity of the highest transcendent Being.<sup>419</sup> Isolating beauty wholly outside of the realm of desire or appetite, does seem too rigid a distinction.<sup>420</sup>

### **I – Beauty: ‘the radiance of all the transcendentals united’**

An aim of our final part is to show that the beautiful in music settles the transcendental status of beauty—that music, in its immaterial, supra-rational potency, is uniquely equipped to illuminate the good and the true in a form that is persuasive and compelling. The third substantial portion of *Creative Intuition*—from the fifth chapter (Poetry and Beauty) to the end of the book—affirms the place of beauty in the roster of transcendentals, but in an original, un-hierarchical way. As Eco notes, Maritain’s definition, ‘based upon, in particular, the *Commentary on the Divine Names* ... has certain peculiarities’ (Eco, 1988, p. 39).

I am not aware that it has any ancestry either in Aquinas himself or in neo-Thomism. Nowhere else do we find a theory which, instead of putting beauty side by side with the other transcendentals, says that it is the splendor of all of them together. ... Still, the definition does seem especially appropriate to beauty ... (Eco, 1988, p. 39).

Can we find in Maritain’s designations of beauty important components appropriate to our experience of music? It is evident that Maritain’s method is his greatest asset. In blending Thomism (profoundly Christian realism) with a free-thinking focus on poetry’s subjective source (creative realism), Maritain achieves a synthesis of striking relevance (McInerney, 1988, p. xv). As Eco points out though, Aquinas also harboured this potential, beginning ‘in the *Summa* to deal with issues in psychology, in a way that would transform the whole question. He introduced the problem of the psychological and subjective desire for beauty, not as a secondary matter, but as part of the very essence’ (Eco, 1988, p. 48). One reaches the heart by

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<sup>419</sup> This section of *De musica* amply illustrates Augustine’s dilemma about the affective beauty of musical sound, for whilst he cannot escape the Platonic distinction and separation between the lowest (human) and the highest (eternal forms/divine) grades of beauty, he cannot accept that the latter renders the former worthless or evil – precisely because of the Christian theological emphasis on the goodness of *all* created matter. Better equipped than Augustine to deal with the perplexities of beauty, Maritain, quoting Aquinas’s *Commentary on the Pseudo-Dionysius De divinis Nominibus* states: ‘the “beauty of anything created is nothing else than a similarity of divine beauty participated in by things,” so that, in the last analysis, “the existence of all things derives from divine beauty”’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 163).

<sup>420</sup> Sevier (2013, pp. 103-126) follows this line of inquiry, showing that by situating beauty within the scheme of the ethical, pleasure and delight are also sought by desire or appetite, and that this is found in Aquinas.



looking into the person—which was exactly the motivation and preoccupation of artists in the modern phase,<sup>421</sup> and why Maritain gravitated to them.

Maritain helpfully locates the so-called transcendentals not just outside the Self in the world of Things, but looks inward (a self-involving “turn to the subject”) for the divinely ordered structures of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness—a development of critical importance given the trajectory of twentieth-century art. One might suggest that the greatest benefit of modern (and postmodern) art in its refusal of traditional beauty may be the way it forces us to look inward for vestiges of primordial Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, inner echoes of suppressed theological categories (Potter, 2018, p. 84).

As usual, Maritain confronts beauty on familiar terms, before extending the horizons of those terms. *Integrity, proportion or consonance, and radiance or clarity*—the traditionally recognised components of beauty,<sup>422</sup> are firmly conjoined to the real experiences of the human person, and to their hylomorphic unity.<sup>423</sup> Just as poetic knowledge and intuition are engendered (through spiritualised emotion) in the preconscious of the intellect, so must the apprehension of beauty rely upon the intelligence. It is ‘the proper perceiving power, the sense, as it were, of the beautiful’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 151).

Of those components, *radiance* is most important because ‘it relates to the most essential yearning of the intellect’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 161)—again suggesting that desire or appetite is involved to some extent. How this should be is hard to comprehend, because we are so conditioned by a Cartesian view of the intellect. The person ‘yearns’ for clarity, not in an idealised, dislocated or conceptualised *moment*,<sup>424</sup> but as ‘the splendor of the secrets of being radiating into intelligence’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 161). If Bernstein means anything like this (I believe he does), then he is repeating the Aristotelian-Scholastic notion of beautiful form—the *splendor formae*—an ‘inner ontological principal which determines things in their essences and qualities, and through which they are, and exist, and act’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 161). Beautiful

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<sup>421</sup> Maritain recounts how a painter he knew, upon standing before the individual whose portrait he was painting, remarked “you’ll confess in the end.” (See Maritain, 1962, p. 58).

<sup>422</sup> Maritain’s description of each component alludes to Aquinas’s ‘*pulchrum est id quod visum placet*,’ and subtly alludes to his own definition of beauty as a singular radiance of the transcendentals compounded. *Integrity* ‘pleases in fullness of Being; *proportion or consonance*, because the intellect is pleased in order and unity; and *radiance or clarity*, because the intellect is pleased in light, or in that which, emanating from things, causes intelligence to see [hear]’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 161). Brackets added.

<sup>423</sup> The compounding of matter and form in the unified structure of the human person.

<sup>424</sup> Here, we have deliberately invoked Kant’s concept of the aesthetic experience. It is marked by ‘purposelessness’ (no aim or objective), ‘disinterestedness’ (removal from reality), and necessity (internal rule, ungoverned by any higher law). As such, the aesthetic experience, especially of music, is altogether severed from knowledge. In the Kantian ‘moment,’ too, desire or appetite should never accompany experience, and Kant’s view of music as nothing more than sensory delectation cements the difference. There is, for Kant, no *splendor formae*—no ontological possession of goodness or truth in musical beauty.

sounds exist and act according to this principle, in such a way that pleasure occurs.<sup>425</sup> Aidan Nichols identifies the personalistic similarities between Balthasar's theological aesthetics and Thomistic hylomorphism, very appropriately.

Balthasar thinks of such form as the ingathering of materials that are then unified in a person who pours them out again, transformed as the expression of himself. ... The free spirit belongs essentially with its "keyboard", the body, and manifests its interiority there in sensuous fashion (Nichols, 2020, p. 41).

### ***Unpacking Maritain's Pivotal Definition***

To restate: 'Beauty is the radiance of all the transcendentals united' (Maritain, 1953, p. 162). Beauty is all-encompassing, clarifying and illuminating. The components of integrity, proportion and radiance are not narrowly demarcated but represent an infinite dispersion of beauty as a whole; and correspondingly, beauty is observed to be a property of Being itself, manifestly belonging in the sphere of the transcendentals, however one ends up trying to apportion it.<sup>426</sup> Mark Spencer observes the close connection Maritain makes between the intuition of Being and the apprehension of beauty.<sup>427</sup>

[T]he light of *esse* once again impresses itself on the intellect without abstraction, and saturates my intention, such that I am struck by the sheer existence of some being that I have conceptualized. I am now aware not just of the initial impact of beauty, but of how this beauty lines up with, but also exceeds, my conceptual understanding: there is a sort of union between my concepts and the self-giving beauty. Beauty appears, as Maritain says, as the splendor of all the transcendentals together, that is, in beauty, all my fundamental concepts are fulfilled in unity with each other and saturated by the glorious given. As Aquinas says, beauty here is the good of delighted cognition (Spencer, 2018, p. 25).

The definition is first given in *Art and Scholasticism* (Maritain, 1962, p. 172), so is not a new development in Maritain's thought. A critical dimension though—perhaps most significant to our inquiry, flows from the fact that beauty and Being are inseparable; and that beauty, therefore inheres to 'the *supreme analogate* of all transcendental perfections. ... The beauty of any

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<sup>425</sup> Hanslick recognised the effects of this, but could not provide a metaphysical epistemology for his formalist approach (in which meaning is attained only through apprehending externalised structures in the work).

Similarly, he severed musical meaning from emotion in the purely mimetic sense (as Langer does), but he could not articulate the deeper conception of spiritualised emotion being *the* prime, 'forming' germ of a work.

<sup>426</sup> Traditionally, the transcendental properties of Being are *Unity* (one, undivided), *Truth* (the power of knowledge), and *Goodness* (the power of desire); and these, metaphysically, are one with Being. Beauty manifestly shares this all-encapsulating, qualifying characteristic, which implies it is the prime transcendental.

<sup>427</sup> Mark Spencer's interpretation of Maritain's definition of beauty is based on reconciling Thomistic metaphysics with the phenomenological notion of *givenness* in Jean Luc Marion. To conclude, however, that 'one can come to much true knowledge without ever attending to the given as such, for the given gives itself and is the basis of all our conscious awareness whether we attend to it or not,' seems contradictory by the fact that 'conscious awareness' is synonymous with attention. Beauty captures and enraptures our attention.

created thing is nothing else than a similarity of divine beauty participated in by things' (Maritain, 1953, p. 163). A tangential point needs some reflection. The theological import of Maritain's philosophy will, by default, represent a fracture with interpretations that do not share its fundamental aim. Eco, for instance, is not a Thomist, and therefore we should expect that he will not interpret St. Thomas to allow wholly intuitive, fully non-conceptual knowing. The analogous proximity between aesthetic beauty and transcendental beauty becomes very close, when the former is sensed only in sound, and when the latter in its most 'clarified' form, is apprehended (albeit obscurely) as the Divine Person of the Son. Types of knowledge which signify this must be an uncomfortable proposition for the sceptic.

Musical beauty—sound which delights us—is apprehended through sense perception, is connatured to the human mind, and is fundamentally the recognition of transcendental beauty. For Maritain, 'intelligence-permeated sense' is thus *the* human mediator of transcendental beauty and the apparatus of its diffusion. Beauty 'keeps its transcendental essence, as well as its essentially analogous character, even when encompassed within the limits of aesthetic beauty' (Maritain, 1953, p. 165). This is the archetype, but what of the practical 'reality' of the work itself? A work of music, in common untrained experience, and that of the trained musician, undeniably probes our mysterious, obscure self-identity, and is simultaneously the 'irritated melancholy' (Maritain, 1953, p. 166) of a soul dimly aware of a perfect radiance that the work imperfectly analogises.<sup>428</sup> This isn't conjecture; it is why people connect music and transcendence (usually without coherent explanation).

In the music of Bach, could we 'logically' expect to experience the most distilled instances of this phenomenon? Bach's formal clarity and unsentimentally elicit such reflection, and in *Art and Scholasticism*, Maritain draws Bach into the centre of his discussion of the transcendentals. 'But let one touch the good and love, like the saints, the true, like an Aristotle, the beautiful, like a Dante or a Bach or a Giotto, then contact is made, souls communicate' (Maritain, 1962, p. 33). *Poesis*, the secret life of art and beauty are drawn to each other; so if this can be recognised in music which is non-representative, expressively restrained and often contrapuntal, then poetry's range is well and truly tested. Citing Chopin (who seems to be

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<sup>428</sup> Maritain cites Baudelaire's translation of a passage from Edgar Allen Poe's *The Poetic Principle*. 'It is the instinct for beauty, he said, "which makes us consider the world and its pageants as a glimpse of, a *correspondence* with, Heaven ... It is at once by poetry and *through* poetry, by music and *through* music, that the soul divines what splendors shine behind the tomb; and when an exquisite poem brings tears to the eyes, such tears are not the sign of an excess of joy, they are rather a witness to an irritated melancholy, an exigency of nerves, a nature exiled in the imperfect world which would possess immediately, on this very earth, a paradise revealed"' (Maritain, 1953, p. 166).

describing *poesis*), Maritain notes that ‘in Bach there is contrapuntal work but of such a perfection and so closely knit with inspiration that you cannot separate them’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 252). The keyboard (harpsichord) works are paradigms.<sup>429</sup> They also hold ‘a somewhat exceptional place in Bach’s *oeuvre*, for they were the one part of it that was not written in direct fulfilment of any of Bach’s official duties’ (Schulenberg, 2006, p. 3). Bach was, essentially, free to be free.

### ***Poetry, Beauty, and Sarabandes***

In *Art and Scholasticism*, Maritain proposed that the music of Bach flows downstream from Gregorian melody, as it pertains to beauty and the *splendor formae*.<sup>430</sup> Not only is plainchant given as the divine-human archetype of melody, but Bach’s instrumental music is given as the next best thing—the closest and purest melodic analogate of transcendental beauty. Schumann, himself an ardent admirer of Bach, had similar ideas, expressing despair that anyone could think of Bach as ‘an old composer who wrote old-fashioned music. I told [a friend] Bach was neither new nor old, but a great deal more, namely, eternal. I really almost lost my temper over it ...’ (Schumann, letter in Stinson, 2020, p. 63).

The dance movements of the keyboard suites are fitting ‘poetic’ analogates for the descriptions of beauty given by Maritain. Almost any movement would suffice, but the Sarabandes seem to exhibit an ‘actuation of the free creativity of the spirit’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 171) that is altogether above and beyond Bach’s fabled productive activity and technical mastery. Each Sarabande is a unique and expressive entity—lyrically beautiful in ways that exceed their simple-triple metre, overt melodic and rhythmic formulas, and balanced phrases (the expected connotations of the dance type). Some are highly wrought. The Sarabande of the French Overture in B minor (BWV 831) is superlative in its unceasing texture of four contrapuntal melodic lines, entirely matching the grandeur and scope of the whole suite (Bach’s longest). Others are more

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<sup>429</sup> The Bach revival in the early part of the nineteenth century arose in different contexts and locations, but was generally stimulated by the growing interest in Bach’s music within the Romantic movement. ‘Significantly, music historians of the Romantic period saw Bach as a composer of instrumental music’ (Temperley and Wollny, 2001), predicated on the burgeoning interest in producing new editions of Bach’s keyboard works. Bach’s appeal to the early romantics may be interpreted as the discovery of his poetry and beauty—of his music containing the depths of human subjective experience, clarified in unique and original works. In this context, and using Bach as an exemplar, Maritain states that a ‘Creator in art is he who discovers a *new analogate* of the beautiful, a new way in which the radiance of form can shine on matter’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 45). Messiaen captures the spirit of this comment by declaring ‘that there is still a place, plainchant itself not having told all’ (Messiaen, 1941, p. 8) for the emergence of an entirely original composer.

<sup>430</sup> See chapter *Music in Art and Scholasticism*. ‘Compare, from this point of view, Gregorian melody or the music of Bach ...’ (Maritain, 1962, p. 57).

transparent, *cantabile* and elegant; for instance, that of the French Suite in G major (BWV 816).<sup>431</sup> (Ex. 7, in Appendix. 1).

Here, Bach prioritises ‘singing melody and idiomatic treatment of the instrument while further reducing the role of imitative counterpoint’ (Schulenberg, 2006, p. 298). Its three parts together constitute the music’s prevailing melodic integrity (its one-ness). But has Bach reduced the melodic potency or unity of the imitative parts to mere harmonic accompaniment? Not in the slightest! The two lower parts are patterned, responsive and conversational; deferring at all times to the ‘soprano’ melody, whilst carrying on a distinct dialogue between themselves. (See Ex. 7 in Appendix 1). From the ninth bar, this really takes flight—a more urgent dialogue ensuing under the penetrating high soprano ‘B’ as the music slips into the dominant key.<sup>432</sup> We could go on, and in more technical detail, but would this ultimately convey the work’s aesthetic beauty as experienced? We would run into Hanslick’s dilemma and his structuralist solution. Beyond suggesting that the two lower parts might be thought of as a ‘conversation about’ or ‘meditation upon’ the soprano melody, there is little more a philosopher can say about the work’s musical integrity, other than it feels persuasively true.<sup>433</sup>

Trapani (2000, p. 16) cautions that it is ‘all too easy to misunderstand words like *clarity*, *radiance*, *intelligibility*, and *light*, if we attempt to understand these terms in relation to *ourselves*, rather than as something clear and luminous *in themselves*. For this reason, beauty is often obscure to us though not in itself.’ The same is surely true of the good. The clarity of Bach’s music resists all but the deepest congeniality with the self, exactly because it is not good for something else, but good in itself and for itself. Hence the music fulfils a crucial Maritainian definition of an entirely *free* or *self-sufficient* art.<sup>434</sup> This definition is founded on Aquinas’s

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<sup>431</sup> Published in 1735, together with the *Italian Concerto*, the *French Overture* BWV 831 contains not only a long opening movement, but a complete partita of ten further dance movements. The French Suites, probably dating from about 1722, are less ambitious in scale and as Schulenberg (2006, p. 299) notes, ‘the designation as “French” suites, whatever its origin, has nothing to do with the style of the works.’ The Sarabande of the fifth suite in G is an *arioso* (song-like style) and is performable on a two manual instrument. (See Schulenberg, 2006, p. 318 for a description of each movement of this suite). By the time of Bach, the Sarabande had become a moderate, quite stately movement in simple-triple time, with a distinctive dotted (long-short) rhythmic pattern and a pronounced emphasis on the second beat of the bar. Bach composed at least thirty nine Sarabandes across his whole oeuvre—more than any other dance type.

<sup>432</sup> How the soprano line evinces Lourié’s and Maritain’s depiction of melody is a point for reflection.

<sup>433</sup> Admittedly, performance experience has shaped these thoughts. In his preliminary note to *Creative Intuition*, Maritain describes why he offers so many ‘texts without comment’ at the end of chapters. ‘My purpose in selecting them was not to set up an apparatus of authorities and witnesses; it was only to prepare a set of significant images, not for the eye but for the mind’ (Maritain, 1953, p. xxxii). Our hesitation follows the spirit of this, but as applied to *the ear* and the mind.

<sup>434</sup> Maritain has been striving to articulate this definition for some time, on account of the paucity and ubiquity of the term ‘fine art.’ (See Maritain, 1953, p. 175).

precept that ‘the existence of all things derives from God’s beauty’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 177), but that we still perceive transcendental beauty through a glass darkly. Maybe in Bach, we hear truth and goodness more clearly.<sup>435</sup>

In purer cases, and perhaps above all in Bach, music is not just what our feelings sound like, but what our feelings *ought* to sound like, and would sound like if we were better or perhaps even perfect beings. Music can be an expression of the phenomenology, the shape and tonality, of our emotions. It can also be, and at its highest it is, something beyond that—a set of ideals that our emotions might aspire towards, a “sentimental education” of something like the kind that the *Republic* and *Philebus* envisage in what Plato there says about music (Chappell, 2021, [forthcoming], Ch. 5.7).

Reconfiguring Plato to the Christian dispensation, Maritain would say that it is not ‘a set of ideals’ but an image of divinity (a reality) towards which our emotions aspire. Beauty and goodness as they exist in undivided unity within God, must, according to St. Thomas, remain obscured in His unknowable essence (*ipsum esse subsistens*), because ‘the human mind of itself is proportioned to knowing material things’ (McInerny, 2014, 11.1). Thus it is *only* through non-philosophical knowledge—through *spiritual* apprehension, that glimmers of the Divine essence are caught through revelation not concepts.<sup>436</sup>

Because it is ‘not abstractive nor rational’ and has ‘no intelligible boundaries, and expands, as it were, to the infinite’ (Maritain, 1953, pp. 184-185), poetic knowledge has become the fulcrum for the apprehension of beauty. But it is more. Lest we are tempted to channel the poetic sense—conceptualising it ‘over and above’ or detached from beauty; or we construe beauty as a rarefied, enchanted experience devoid of intellection; or worse, we attempt to ‘claim creative power’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 231), coerce or objectify beauty and poetry; Maritain demurs. Poetry is connatured to beauty and in love with beauty, and as Bernstein rightly noted, sounds which delight us when heard, do so for *no* extraneous reasons or purposes.

Poetry tends toward beauty, not as toward an object to be known or to be made, or a definite end to be attained in knowledge or realized in existence, but as toward that very life of yours which is in the one whom love has transformed into another yourself (Maritain, 1953, p. 172).

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<sup>435</sup> Anecdotally, string and keyboard players regard playing Bach almost catechistically, not just in the sense of acquiring distilled technical knowledge, but more in contemplating all that needs to be known about how music should be—melodically, harmonically, rhythmically; and that by beginning each day playing Bach, the virtues of the practical intellect, in some mysterious way, draw startlingly close to the moral virtues.

<sup>436</sup> An underlying assumption in Hanke (1973) is that it is not necessary to accept this proposition in order to discern the strength and integrity of Maritain’s philosophy of art. Some may hear a work by Bach and be moved beyond comprehension, or delighted by a ‘radiance’ of form, without qualification or impressions of transcendence. However, such free acts, in themselves, nonetheless procure an intuition of Being.

Similarly, to dismiss beauty, either carelessly or purposely, is not just dangerous but delusional, because it cannot be avoided. Beauty, as Balthasar states, witnesses to the light of Being, and *Poesis*, as Maritain confirms, sees to that end. So too does the music of Bach, in which goodness and truth shine through the *splendor formae* which his meticulous craftsmanship audibly signifies. But lest we also forget that Bach was only human (not a perfect being) and not God, Maritain revises an assessment he made in a previous work.

“Fearing,” I wrote, “to lay a paradicial hand on the greatest of musicians, dare I say there is little of magic in Johann Sebastian Bach? Yes, I shall say that this most sublime of music, this mother-music, is a music without magic.” This was probably too absolute a statement, neglecting some particular moments in the work of Bach, yet it holds true in the main ... I went on to observe that in Bach (and this is perhaps the secret of his power and his fecundity) poetry is entirely integrated in the making and substance of the work, whose soul is not instrument but queen and goddess always (Maritain, 1953, p. 401).

## II – Music, beauty and contemplation: to distinguish or unite?

We will return to Bach in conclusion, noting for now that Maritain, like Aquinas, endorses Augustine’s view of reason holding the person to account regarding beauty. It is ‘the magnet of what St. Augustine called *ratio superior*, the “superior reason,” which looks at and adheres to things that are eternal, can keep the soul of the poet in some kind of unity and ensure him the freedom of poetic knowledge at its own proper level’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 234). In his quest for the highest ‘numbers’ which drives Augustine to the end of *De musica*, he seeks to comprehend the beauty of sound, not poetic knowledge—he would have no particular notion of the latter, but the principle is identical. *Poesis* expresses through sense, it delights sense, it divines the spiritual via sensory means; but above all, it is ‘the heaven of the working reason’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 235). All these attributes underscore the belief that *reason hears*. It is one way of describing Bach as composer, and the rest of us—contemplative performers and listeners—apprehending the beauty of his works, as we grasp our own being through pre-eminently spiritualised emotion. Schumann was not wrong about Bach.

A particular motivation for this theological aesthetics has been to give the association between music and transcendence a solid underpinning, which is why it is rather surprising that Thomistic scholarship has largely avoided doing so. In a major recent work, James Matthew Wilson proffers a far less liberated view of modernity than Maritain, (Wilson, 2017, pp. 244-257), but conveniently typifies a dilemma we meet if we only reify the visual sense. ‘If the intellect always acts through the bodily sense of sight, so also the bodily sense of sight, as our

“fullest” such sense, anticipates that still greater mode of sight, intellectual vision’ (Wilson, 2017, p. 101). This is all very well, but what of the auditory sense?

The eye sees the sensible form (or shape) of things that derives from the invisible, because intellectual and ontological, form that constitutes the essence or nature of a thing. Only the eye of the mind can perceive intellectual form, which is the truth of being ... Our experience of the intensity or sharpness of our bodily sight anticipates and gives us a way to imagine (by analogy) the much more intense and sharp, because immediate, experience of seeing-the-form, of knowing the truth (Wilson, 2017, p. 101).

It may be that Wilson is happy to convert each reference to ‘the eye’ into an auditory equivalent of the aesthetic *visio* (Eco, 1988, p. 58), and later on acknowledging Augustine, he does accept that music is ‘the exquisite medium for a particular kind of narrative, that of the intellect discovering the necessary order of contingent beings and developing that order’ (Wilson, 2017, p. 255).<sup>437</sup> (Another metaphor for Bach?) Our point is that the commonly-attested association between music and transcendence is often couched in mystical and vague aphorisms.<sup>438</sup> The distinct advantages of a realist philosophy of musical sound—that it extends conceptual and epistemological boundaries within the purview of what *is*—have not been realised as they should, prompting Maritain’s call for a ‘separate, quite special analysis’ of music (Maritain, 1953, p. 4).

We have repeatedly utilised an authoritative source in Maritain scholarship. John G. Trapani’s *Poetry, Beauty, and Contemplation* (Trapani, 2011) is a meticulous account of the origins, development and structure of Maritain’s aesthetics. Trapani is largely uncritical of Maritain’s epistemological scheme and he does not engage with its detractors, whose main objection is that intuition is no basis for knowledge and a distortion of Aquinas (see O’Reilly, 2011).<sup>439</sup> However, like Maritain, ‘[Trapani] emphasizes that beauty needs to be experienced before one

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<sup>437</sup> Wilson makes the same fundamental error about musical embodiment as we earlier noted in Maritain, stating ‘Ordering is always the ordering of parts, and those parts—which may include simply the tones of a score—serve as well as anything for characters’ (Wilson, 2017, p. 255). As we noted, Augustine had no species of number for marks on a page.

<sup>438</sup> Or it is afforded an entirely psychological trajectory. In her final three volume uncompleted work, *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling* (Langer, 1970), Susanne Langer undermines the brilliant observations of her early career, by proposing an essentially ‘animal’ ontology of human creativity, and effectively paving the way for a raft of post-evolutionary, reductive and scientific accounts of music.

<sup>439</sup> Kevin O’Reilly’s review of Trapani particularly mentions Eco’s critique as being especially worth engaging, but does not recognise that Eco and Trapani are approaching Maritain’s aesthetics from entirely different perspectives (which Gallagher notes). Eco provides a thorough, but by no means comprehensive, historical and contextual approach to Aquinas, whereas Trapani draws together all Maritain’s relevant writings to show how his philosophy of art was formed and progressed.



can have a theory of it' (Gallagher, 2012, p. 337).<sup>440</sup> Trapani subtly questions Maritain's preoccupation with the creative process, the formative dimension of poetry and the ontology of the work, to the apparent exclusion of *purely receptive* intuitive knowing 'which does not terminate in the production of a work but simply in the joy of the beholder' (Sikora, 1966, pp. 87-88). His question is posed four ways:

1. Since poetry is the root of Poetic Knowledge, *must it* be considered as ordered *always and necessarily* to creative action alone?
2. Why isn't it possible to consider the two "moments" of Poetic Knowledge ... "as cognitive" and ... "as creative," autonomously?
3. How can the necessarily creative orientation of Poetic Knowledge account for the experience of the lover of the beautiful, who delights in the Poetry of an authentic aesthetic experience ... without having any "incitation to create?"
4. If Maritain does have built in to his epistemology an explanation of the "knowing-delighting" experience, why hasn't he provided us with more information concerning it? (Trapani, 2011, pp. 87-88)

To reduce this further; where, in Maritain's philosophy of art, can be found an autonomous explanation of the aesthetic experience as we most frequently construe it? Also as Burke, Kant, Schopenhauer, and seemingly every other aesthetician of note has attempted to circumscribe it—as entirely disinterested delight. Trapani's claim is that a discrete reception-as-contemplation can be distinguished in Maritain's oeuvre.

In many ways, we have already addressed this hypothesis by turning Maritain's theory towards music, and by prioritising the auditory sense. We have avoided segregating musical experience into autonomous production, transmission and reception categories, and showed that it is possible to undertake a thorough Thomistic scrutiny of the composing process, without construing the subsequent passage of the work as unrelated spheres of experience. On the contrary, how, other than through receptive scrutiny can we perceive anything of a work's genesis in the first place, aside from actually composing it? Integral to aesthetic experience must be a general congeniality which suggests that apparently disinterested, contemplative experience must in fact participate in the creative act at some level, even if it is purely cognitive in its termination. If this were not so, the attentive performer could not feel such a deep

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<sup>440</sup> Daniel Gallagher's review concludes that 'Trapani has set the stage for a more fruitful dialogue between Maritain and other schools of aesthetics. Indeed, the next step is to put Maritain in conversation with thinkers such as Roger Scruton ... and others who have reflected deeply on the connection between beauty, goodness, happiness, and value, just as Maritain did.'

obligation to the composer's creative intent—indeed to *become* the work through intentionality, and take evident delight in doing so.<sup>441</sup>

Trapani's hypothesis blends well with the present inquiry because it attempts to distinguish a further category—actually, a further experience—past the domain of making (a Maritainian dogma) and beyond the epistemological parameters within which we have been working.<sup>442</sup> It proposes that *delight*—the cognitive reaction to the presence, immediacy, and radiance of beauty, could be a starting point for knowledge 'beyond the creative requirement that Maritain's strict definition of Poetic Knowledge imposes' (Trapani, 2011, p. 88).

We shall keep Trapani's hypothesis in mind as a complementary study. It speaks to a theological aesthetic of beauty, connoting 'a kind of separate "grace" superior to the poetry of the work' (Maritain, 1953, p. 401), or a higher way of sensing aesthetic beauty. On the other hand, we are wary of distinguishing what cannot be united to the whole integrated knowing experience, which, whether we *feel* it or not, begins in the artist's experience and in the inspiration of the composer.<sup>443</sup>

### ***Contemplation and Inspiration***

Maritain reaches a stage, roughly consistent with the third major portion of *Creative Intuition*, where he turns quite existentially, to the real experience of art and creation. He is far less reliant on Scholastic method (although it remains in the background), and his language becomes richer and more expansive. We have dealt with the notion of inspiration on several occasions, noting with Maritain that it 'cannot be reduced to a mere gushing forth of images separated from intelligence, any more than to a discursus of logical reason' (Maritain, 1953, p. 239). Neither does it descend like the Platonic *Muse* nor erupt in Dionysian brute passion. All this our composers have affirmed. But 'how are we to account for the fact' that 'one quite naturally tends to give expression in imagery' (Sullivan, 1964, p. 109). Maritain starts to describe how he believes inspiration arises in the artist, and it begins in contemplation.

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<sup>441</sup> Leonard Bernstein's preamble and Glenn Gould's subsequent performance of Bach's Concerto No. 1 in D minor from the CBS *Ford Presents* broadcast of January 31, 1960, exemplifies this. Bernstein comments, 'Gould and Bach have become a kind of legendary combination, in spite of Gould's extreme youth and Bach's extreme age.' The intimacy of the connection between composer and performer is Bernstein's exact point.

<sup>442</sup> Maritain's uses of Intuition and Connaturality as two parts of an integrated knowing experience, are helpfully abridged in Trapani (2011, pp. 50, 51).

<sup>443</sup> Gallagher (2012, p. 337) notes rightly that Trapani himself is a musician, yet his unique survey cries out for concrete examples and observations of real musical experience (of the sort which Maritain gives in poetry and painting). There is scope for real expansion here.

Poetic experience, which is the intense occasion of poetic knowledge, commands art itself; it is the primary rule. Logically, there must be a prior apprehension of the work for poetic experience to exercise its dominion. Whilst the work is manifestly the termination of poetic intuition, we recall the notion of its existence in a state of virtuality. Therefore, this existence must play a determining part in the ‘commanding form’ of poetic experience.<sup>444</sup> It is the entanglement of what *is* and what *becomes*, as it pertains to the one work. Maritain demarcates inspiration in two phases, as *systole* and *diastole*, in order to portray this. The former is characterised by ‘quietude ... a state of virtuality and dormant energy,’ the latter ‘by the entrance of poetic intuition into the field of consciousness ... a catalytic agent ... a single transient motion’ (Maritain, 1953, pp. 242, 243).

Thus it is that after the silent gathering a breath arises, coming not from outside, but from the centre of the soul—sometimes a breath which is almost imperceptible, but compelling and powerful, through which everything is given in easiness and happy expansion; sometimes a gale bursting all of a sudden, through which everything is given in violence and rapture; sometimes the gift of the beginning of a song; sometimes an outburst of unstopable words (Maritain, 1953, p. 243)

In the beginning, Poetic Knowledge *as creative*, exists in a contemplative state, but inexorably becomes the ‘incitation to create.’ The two are joined. It is difficult not to hear in Maritain’s observation the echo of Genesis (to which Leonard Bernstein earlier alluded): ‘and the spirit of God moved over the waters’ (Gen. 1:2). Can we imagine God forever delighting and contemplating, in purest cognition—but never delighting to create? Practically though, Maritain notes that works can be quite long—especially poems and music, but this does not diminish the governing role and primacy of inspiration over each development. ‘No instant in the making of the work should escape [inspiration], at least, as we have seen, inasmuch as inspiration is made identical with poetic intuition’. It also requires ‘the rational toil of the virtue of art and all the logic’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 246). And God said ... and God said ... in the *diastole* of creation. Perhaps Bach, too, rested on the seventh day.

An initial response to Trapani (2011) may therefore be that the ‘knowing-delighting’ (purely cognitive) experience is not segregated from the creative sphere of poetic knowledge, but

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<sup>444</sup> In her 1953 work *Feeling and Form*, Langer uses exactly the term ‘commanding form’ in almost the same way as Maritain. In music, the first semblance of form ‘takes place entirely within the composer’s mind ... and issues in a more or less sudden recognition of the total form to be achieved’ (Langer, 1953, p. 121). The comparison between Langer’s and Maritain’s thesis is further heightened by Langer’s familiarity with Henri Bergson (pp. 112-119), and her assertion that Bergson’s ‘nearness to the problems of art ... made him preeminently the artists’ philosopher’ (p. 114).

rather, it is a reversal, or reverting, from the *diastole* to *systole* phase in a united knowing experience. It sits better with the practical experience that musicians like Aaron Copland (1952, pp. 7-20) describe: the imaginative mind is a shared (and treasured) quality or property in which intuition as creative, and intuition as cognitive somewhat merge. Creation elides into cognition, and visa-versa, and the sense of beauty in its all-embracing radiance, informs and delights the composer, performer or listener.

When Coleridge put down his famous phrase, “the sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it, is a gift of the imagination,” he was referring, of course, to the musical delights of poetry. But it seems to me even more true when applied to the musical delights of music. An imaginative mind is essential to the creation of art ... it is even more essential in music precisely because music provides the broadest possible vista for the imagination since it is the freest, the most abstract, the least fettered of all the arts ... no strict limitation of frame need hamper the intuitive functioning of the imaginative mind (Copland, 1952, p. 7).

Copland also detects desire in the rapture of the delighted listener—a desire to understand, to know (Copland, 1952, pp. 10-11), reminding us of the role of beauty in irradiating the good.<sup>445</sup> In this respect Trapani is astute to designate contemplation ‘*knowing-delighting*.’ In the delighted listener there may be no actual ‘incitation to create,’ but there is the appetite to know. In the pure contemplation of beauty is ‘something understood,’<sup>446</sup> for it could never be a disinterested, purposeless and entirely idealised ‘moment.’ When Maritain and Lourié defined the properties of melody as being fundamentally revealing, disclosive and epiphanic, they gave us five ways in which the musical apex of poetic experience and inspiration—*melody itself*—reveals a unified intuitive matrix of knowing experiences. It is necessarily ordered to creative action, but not exclusively so.

The more creative-intuitive facets are seen in melody’s disclosive, confessional discourse. Melody is the *aria*—the direct and subjective outpouring of an individual, in response to the inpouring of nature, things and experience. As ‘a thing in itself’ which is autonomously and purely poetic, melody *must* germinate and grow in order to be known. The more cognitive-intuitive facets are seen in the way melody draws transcendental values to the fore. Melody is a good *in itself*. The unity and conformity displayed in the composer’s creative-intuitive

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<sup>445</sup> To which Copland also alludes, but feels unqualified to offer further comment. (Copland, 1952, pp. 16-17).

<sup>446</sup> The analogous nature of transcendental and poetic beauty is captured in George Herbert’s poem *Prayer the church’s banquet*, where all the infinitely varied ways of prayer, depicted in vivid and patterned imagery, are finally reduced to one simple epistemologically profound statement; prayer is ‘something understood.’

processes, means that when a particularly beautiful melody arrests us, we apprehend a truth *in itself*. And of course, in contemplation, the temporal matters far less.

That the contemplation of the musically beautiful resides in cognition is beyond question, but when Bernstein claims that ‘that’s all there is to it,’ he is not quite telling the whole story. Delight, which is the cognitive reaction to the presence, immediacy, and radiance of beauty, is a starting point for knowledge: the message of Augustine is that it rightly should be so. We not only sense, but strive to attain the perfect goodness, truth, and beauty of the Divine, supremely clarified in the Son. Perhaps, then, a moment of delight unites cognitive experience with the creative obligation shared by composer, performer and listener, but our primary focus must remain, with Maritain, on creation itself.

### III – An inchoate philosophy of music?

If poets and composers take flight from a similar impulse, then perhaps I am more of a poetry professor than I had thought. The music of poetry must forever escape me, no doubt, but the poetry of music is always with me. It signifies that largest part of our emotive life—the part that sings (Copland, 1952, pp. 1-2).

Through the eighth and ninth chapters of *Creative Intuition* (‘The Internalisation of Music’ and ‘The Three Epiphanies of Creative Intuition’), Maritain cements his transformation of the Platonic notion of *mousikè*, to elevate the art as well as the concept of music in ever more experiential terms. This is where scholarship has misjudged the extent to which Maritain speaks of music in more than just analogous ways.<sup>447</sup> Certainly he lacks concrete examples, and shows a naïve understanding of music’s more technical aspects; but which non-professional, but cultivated listener (Copland, 1952, p. 14) could be described otherwise? One might add that if it were not for Maritain, Arthur Lourié could easily have faded still further into musicological oblivion, and the theoretical writings of many of the twentieth century’s greatest composers would have lacked some singularly powerful insights. Would indeed Stravinsky’s *Poetics* ever have materialised?

The material that follows is a more explicit dialogue with Maritain’s later thought, given in the same progressive and assimilative spirit. It is a first-hand evaluation, relying far less upon Maritain scholarship, for the reason that the usual sources are conspicuously silent when it

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<sup>447</sup> Fallon (2002, p. 288) asserts, ‘Maritain’s use of the word melody is vague and poetic. Although Maritain insisted that poetic knowledge is manifested only in works of art, he never successfully demonstrated this in his writings on music, the very art he felt most directly touched the source of artistic creativity. His descriptions of music are never specific and are often naïve and fanciful.’ Needless to say, we have offered an entirely different, more positive analysis.

comes to music, and indeed to a Thomistic philosophy of music at all. In many respects, the composers to whom we have turned, have fulfilled the role adequately.

The genesis of a work, as it has so far been elucidated in *Creative Intuition*, can be abridged, very succinctly, in the following threefold explanation.

1. Poetic intuition, knowledge and experience is born ‘through spiritualized emotion, in the preconscious, non-conceptual life of the intellect.’ It is a ‘flash’ of knowing. This occurs through and within a spiritual milieu.
2. The spiritual milieu is ‘a kind of fluid and moving world, activated by the diffuse light of the Illuminating Intellect, and seemingly asleep but secretly tense and vigilant—which is this preconscious life of the intellect, and of the imagination, and of emotion, empty of any actual concept or idea, but full of images, full of emotional movements, and in which all the past experiences and treasures of memory acquired by the soul are present in a state of virtuality’ (all Maritain, 1953, p. 301).
3. The former (1) is not a virtual existence within the latter (2), but an original actuation.

All the above are gathered into a single designation—a ‘*musical stir*.’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 300). Moreover, ‘a wordless musical stir,’ or unformulated song that is inaudible to the ear. The first recognisable signs of poetic experience and inspiration are portrayed in terms of music, even as music, and more specifically, as melody. Maritain questions himself as to the manner in which this *musical stir* unfolds. What he describes we will liken to the ripples in a pond which expand in waves. Hidden at the foot of a page is possibly the most pivotal sentence of the entire book – as far as our inquiry is concerned.

I submit that in the relationship between this indivisible unity of the poetic intuition and the successive partial units of its expansion or expression in its own vital milieu a kind of music is involved (Maritain, 1953, p. 301).

Maritain has exhausted his vocabulary and has no other word for what he is describing. It is *music*. Alternatively, by examining poetic intuition in order to account for music or a general notion of what constitutes music, it becomes even clearer why he has chosen the word. Music ‘provides the broadest possible vista for the imagination’ (Copland, 1952, p. 7). It is progressive and dynamic: it advances wholly auditorily in a temporal way, with each development expanding upon, and inseparable from a primary creative impulse.<sup>448</sup> From almost any

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<sup>448</sup> Langer’s *Feeling and Form* (1953) incorporates possibly the closest account of the early musical creative process. This was recognised by Jesuit priest, philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan, who drew

perspective, these truisms validate Maritain's use of the term. At some point, however, we must cross the threshold from the music of virtuality to that of actuality.

***The Music of Intuitive 'Pulsions' – The Unconscious to The Conscious***

To describe the nature and operation of 'the musical stir immediately produced by poetic experience and poetic intuition' (Maritain, 1953, p. 302), Maritain devises a lively English-French hybrid expression. *'Intuitive pulsion.'* This depicts the tendential, dynamic transience of the musical stir, as well as the unity and continuity between single *pulsions*—from one ripple in the pond to the next. This is melody at its earliest stage of expansion, where images, movements, emotions, experiences, exist in a nascent state. It does not yet infer musical sounds; but more 'a meaning set free in motion: that is to say a kind of melody—in the state of a source, a primeval melody ...' (Maritain, 1953, p. 302).

With the growth of poetic intuition through the expansion of intuitive pulsions, those latent images and dynamic gestures acquire more specificity and more distinct emotive resonances, until they become a fundamental 'emotion,' perceptible and cogent. 'The soundless rhythmic and harmonic relations between intuitive pulsions, together with their soundless melody, emerge into consciousness' (Maritain, 1953, p. 303). It is the start of the operative exercise—art in its most distilled state and the first transient, tendential stage of the work's creation. Leonard Meyer offers a decidedly functional way of envisaging the development of musical shape, but he recognises the dynamism involved.<sup>449</sup>

The apprehension of a series of physically discrete stimuli as constituting a pattern or shape results from the ability of the human mind to relate the constituent parts of the stimulus or stimulus series to one another in an intelligible and meaningful way (Meyer, 1956, p. 157).

We detour to ask a serious question. Is Maritain's use of the terms *music* and *melody*, and other music-specific vocabulary, wholly analogical? He may claim to be a philosopher looking at things in 'an effort of introspective reconstruction,' (Maritain, 1953, p. 304), but he is achieving this with a depth and precision that affords the words he has chosen great authenticity. He may only ostensibly be analysing the art of the poet and the process of verbal poetic creation. If we were to remove each reference to words and language from his 'metaphors' (reconstructing his effort still further), we would be left with an operative nebulosity terminating in a work of

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extensively on Langer's text in his educational works, particularly admiring her portrayal of insight and intuition. (See Liddy, 1995, pp. 53-90).

<sup>449</sup> An intriguing comparison may be drawn with Leonard Meyer's ground-breaking text *Music and Emotion* (Meyer, 1956), which was the first sustained attempt to draw gestalt psychology and musical analysis together.

no genus. Unless, that is, those metaphors were interpreted as the fundamental, ontological image of something else—creation *as sound*. It is the music of the music, or the music ‘before’ musical sound (both real and imagined), and it thus expresses not only the hidden life of every art, but the primordial life *of* art.

Maritain’s claim that ‘music is feeling then, not sound’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 303) would only be true if the tendential operative expansion of the intuitive pulsions engendered the word and not music, and only if the process terminated in a poem. The work would possess emotive resonance, essentially a music-less echo of that ‘musical’ stir which first arose in the poet’s soul. But if we were to claim that *music is feeling then, and sound*, the analogy is no longer an analogy. It is an account of the genesis of music itself. Maritain is caught in a semantic and semiotic dilemma. He acknowledges the difficulty of scrutinising creative processes from the outside, and notes that we are assisted in this by our own aesthetic experience—that of the contemplative, receptive listener for whom ‘a similar music is awakened within our own soul’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 304).<sup>450</sup>

The distinction between stages in the initial expansion of poetic experience is one of nature, not necessarily of time, that is, the operative acts of the artisan may be synchronous with the imaginal and the emotional. This rings true to the experience of composers, and is logically consistent with the nature of poetic experience being united and integrated. Aspects tend to subsist. The central poetic intuition and subsequent (or consubstantial) secondary flashes of intuition, guide the development of each stage, in choices between this and that. The artist is free to choose how to progress a work from an infinite range of possibilities; but in reality, the choice is between exercising the virtues of art in consonance with the central poetic intuition, or deviating from it, thus diminishing the integrity and proportion of the work, and rendering it dull and unclear (not beautiful). But there is always freedom.

The receptive correlate of this (see Maritain, 1953, pp. 307-308) is that the listener must also exercise freedom; to consent ‘to the work and to the intentions of the poet [composer]’ if they are to contemplate any thing beyond the work’s external trappings. In this, Trapani is correct, in as much as *knowing-delighting* is assenting to beauty or submitting to knowledge-by-revelation, which, of itself, is an act of faith and not a productive act. We are back to Balthasar’s claim that the desire or cognitive ability to see and seek beauty profoundly relates to the

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<sup>450</sup> Further suggesting that intuition as purely cognitive, segregated from intuition as purely creative, is a division of the intellect which experience doesn’t wholly validate. More of a sympathetic flowing, two-way osmosis, or exchange between the two, would be a better construal.



apprehension of being, and that by defining beauty as an all-encompassing transcendental radiance, we afford it supreme epistemic value.<sup>451</sup> ‘The Thomist should conceive of being (*ens*) fundamentally as beauty, that is, as holistically giving itself’ (Spencer, 2018, p. 3), and moments of existential delight indicate as much. This does not contradict the ultimate witness of creation—it confirms it. The work exists, and before its existence it didn’t exist. The obvious metaphor is that the ripple in the pond radiates!

Any poetic work is a revealer. A good work delights the sense and the intellect, but the radiance, in its beauty, is first of all the radiance of the ontologic mystery grasped by the intuition of the poet: then when the work strikes the eyes [ears] of another, it causes a communication of intuition, a passage from creative intuition to receptive intuition (Maritain, 1953, p. 307).

The listener does not participate in the subjectivity of the composer—immersed in a single, raw symptomatic emotive life.<sup>452</sup> They keep their own identity, but recognise the composer’s ‘spiritualized and intentional emotion; participating in his *emotion as causing to hear* – ‘a transient and incomparable knowing, a vision, a fleeting revelation’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 309).<sup>453</sup> The radiance of beauty is vital in the transmission of the work from composer to listener. It has a mediating, illuminating, interpretational role; and by extension, an epistemological mission. It is the first, most immediate touchpoint whereby something new is experienced and known. Maritain bemoaned the demise of the Mediaeval artisan, remarking that the artist’s mission was once to ‘shelter the prayer, instruct the intelligence and rejoice the eyes [ears] and the soul’ (in Nichols, 2007, p. 128), but his essential message is clear. Sounds which delight, do so in their givenness—cognitively drawing the listener ‘into that grey area where the demarcation between supernatural and natural contemplation becomes difficult to discern.

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<sup>451</sup> Aidan Nichols highlights Balthasar’s complete reversal of the direction and emphases of Kant’s *Critiques*. Kant ‘had begun by questioning the human faculties of knowing. Only after he had solved the problem to his satisfaction did he then go on to discuss ethics. Finally as a kind of afterthought, he considered the question of the perception of beauty, which he tended to subsume under the concept of the “sublime,” that subspecies of beauty that leads to disinterested, unengaged contemplation’ (Oakes, 1997 in Nichols, 2020, p. 38). It is inconceivable that Trapani intends to render the contemplative, purely cognitive experience of beauty in Kantian terms, and perhaps this might have been clarified in his initial four-point question.

<sup>452</sup> Echoing the Kantian idea of universal intersubjectivity (each participant accesses the same idealised, sublimated ‘moment’). Balthasar, on the other hand, stresses that delight, through beautiful form, ‘is founded upon the fact that, in it, the truth and goodness of the depths of reality itself are manifested and bestowed, and this manifestation and bestowal reveal themselves as being something infinitely and exhaustively valuable and fascinating’ (Balthasar, 1982, p. 118). Poetic knowledge is epiphanic and unique to each person.

<sup>453</sup> This is the most directly comparable aspect of Langer’s and Maritain’s theory. For Langer, what is experienced are the formal structures of what an emotion ‘feels like,’ whereas for Maritain, what is experienced (connaturally) is spiritualized, intentional emotion. In both cases, we do not feel or intuit what actual feelings or emotions the composer may or may not have had. The accounts of our composers also confirm that they, too, are not overly interested in affectively mimetic expression.

‘On the one hand, the perception of beauty is clearly a form of natural contemplation, since it is not an immediate contact with, or presence of the Divine itself. On the other hand, beauty is a transcendental, a divine name’ (Trapani, 2011, p. 151). Can we detect a discrete *knowing-delighting* experience that is contemplative and separate from intuition-as-creative? Yes, and no. But in reaching a culminative definition of the aesthetic experience as ‘*that sense of liberation from the urge and drive of life*’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 310), Maritain gives us a delightful way of considering the possibility.

### ***A Work Maritain Might Have Liked***

Part One of the present chapter began with a personal musical reflection. It was a manifesto to declare that the kind of ‘separate, special analysis’ for which Maritain calls, is grounded in observation and experience. Maritain’s suggestive examples (in poetry and painting) clearly mean a lot to him, and in this, the influence of Raïssa Maritain, a poet, is impossible to underestimate. Maritain offers his poetic examples entirely speculatively, many as ‘texts without comment ... self-sufficient objects likely to nourish either the reflection or the pleasure of the intellect’ (Maritain, 1953, p. xxxii), and he encourages his reader to make up their own mind about the veracity of his observations. In this, he positively embraces modern art, seeing in it ‘more hope for the intellect than in modern philosophy’ (Hudson, 1987, p. 252).

The Violin Concerto No. 2 by Béla Bartók (1881-1945), composed between 1937 and 1938, is a mature modernist masterpiece, exhibiting a highly idiosyncratic approach to the musical elements and to the solo instrument, the technical demands of which are uncompromising. (Ex. 8, in Appendix. 1). It may not be an instantly obvious paradigm of melodic supremacy, poetic intuition or inspiration; yet in these and many other ways, it satisfies the aesthetic criteria for a deeply Thomistic-Maritainian work. In Western tonal music, there are few better large-scale epitomes of the supremacy of melody than the concerto form. Typically a multi-movement work where a solo instrument more or less assumes expressive control of the music, the concerto is a work about a particular instrument, often written for a particular musician, and it distinguishes a composer’s melodic thought from the surrounding orchestral textures in a way that a symphony does not.

The short commentary that follows blends personal reflection with an inevitable dip into musical analysis. It attempts, in overtly Maritainian terms, to recall a first encounter with the concerto (first experienced as a recording), but draws on the familiarity of subsequent study and performance. (See Ex. 8 in Appendix 1).

From the opening of the first movement, we hear an explicit distinction between non-melodic (more objective) accompaniment material and bold declamatory (more subjective) lyricism in the solo violin.<sup>454</sup> Throughout the first twenty-one bars, the work's impetus, basic metrical framework and textural palette are quietly established by the harp and lower strings, with sinewy, discreet contrapuntal lines in the woodwinds. The harp opening is delightful—seemingly arising from nowhere and continuing a music that had been playing in the background for ages. But at the upbeat to the seventh bar, our attention is forcefully 'grabbed' by a melody of overwhelming dominance, grandeur and charisma—the composer did not wait long before releasing his poetic and emotive 'song.' The solo violin is audacious and insistent, and the listener is captivated by the melody's unrestrained expressive gestures: its tessitura and sweep, its extravagance, and its breathless absence of rests.

Customary analysis of the melody would highlight the ubiquitous Hungarian-Romanian folk inflections: its major-minor ambiguity, intervallic nuances and robust rhythmic articulations, all of which are idiomatic to Bartok's style. This would be accurate, but only in a superficially investigative way, for these elements are Bartok's tools and techniques and they are subsumed by his creative, poetic voice.<sup>455</sup> The performer, too, must acquire familiarity with the composer's 'tools,' as well as his own, but without obscuring the work's poetry and meaning—which is all that ultimately matters to the listener (it either delights or it doesn't). The transmission process requires a delicate synthesis of creative and cognitive sensibility if a performance is to possess integrity, authenticity and grant intellection. In becoming, as it were, the composer's *spiritualized* and *intentional* emotion through connaturality, performer and listener 'co-delight,' as one of the century's great violin pedagogues stressed.<sup>456</sup>

The best performance always partakes of the nature of an improvisation in which the artist is moved by the music he plays, forgets about technique, and abandons himself with improvisatory freedom to the inspiration of the moment. A performance of this nature is the only one which is capable of transmitting the essence of the music to the listener with the immediacy of a true re-creation (Galamian, 1962, p. 7).

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<sup>454</sup> Although quite different in style, the opening of the Violin Concerto by Jean Sibelius shares the same sharp differentiation between an almost primitive 'vocalise' of the solo violin and the surrounding accompaniment. This distinction continues to manifest throughout the three movements.

<sup>455</sup> 'By its very nature music invites imaginative treatment, and that the facts of music, so called, are only meaningful insofar as the imagination is given free play' (Copland, 1952, p. 7). Stravinsky moderates this somewhat, maintaining that if the two facets (technique and poetry) are to be meaningfully connected, then the method and procedures of a composer's style should be understood as being consubstantial with his melodic intuition and poetic inspiration. (See Stravinsky, 1947, p. 51). There is ample evidence of such aesthetic unity in Bartok's concerto.

<sup>456</sup> Arguably the greatest 'technical' violin teacher of the twentieth century, Ivan Galamian nonetheless always stressed the supremacy of expression and cognitive-creative freedom which superior craftsmanship facilitates.

Tradition still appears in the work.<sup>457</sup> There is formal integrity, a harmonious-ness of shape, structure and contour to the melody's phrasing—even an overt tonic-to-dominant movement quite evident in the solo violin alone. The opening 21 bars are an archetypal, regularly-proportioned series of phrases, the basic structure of which could legitimately be termed 'classical.' These 'traditional' features are not an idealised resurrection of past forms, but an epistemic means of expression for Bartok, and of interpretation for the listener. It is structure in a more metaphysical sense, and it is somewhat disguised by the violin melody's 'outburst.' The freedom and expressive intensity of the solo violin part sounds diametrically opposed to the serenity of the harp and pizzicato string underscore, yet, oddly, emerges from it. Concertos have been humorously satirised as a pitched battle between soloist and orchestra using similar thematic 'weapons',<sup>458</sup> but not here. Bartok's soloist is more given to impassioned soliloquy.

### *The Internalization of Music in the Modern Epoch*

For Maritain, the *poesis* of the modern phase is marked by a single signification, where the 'wall of separation between the poetic intuition and the unconceptualizable flash of reality to which it points' (Maritain, 1953, p. 314) is dissolved. What matters is the creative 'flash,' or the epiphanic possession of knowledge. In this, what begins as unconceptualisable remains so and never terminates in a concept; which, as Haynes (2015) notes, firmly prohibits conceptual art entering Maritain's scheme or being thought of as in any way free.<sup>459</sup> A conceptual piece would not engender from intuitive pulsions, because the concept itself would prohibit the 'ripple' in our musical pond expanding freely.<sup>460</sup> As we have shown, whilst emerging through the epochs and phases of musical time, and arising in singular instances within those phases,

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<sup>457</sup>As Maritain and Cocteau agree, it should in every epoch under different disguises (Schloesser, 2000, p. 188).

<sup>458</sup> Here, referring to Susan McClary's socially-constructed account and highly imaginative depiction of the emancipated harpsichordist 'overthrowing' the orchestra in the first movement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5. (See McClary, 1987, p. 28).

<sup>459</sup> Haynes's article on Maritain's aesthetic criteria situates poetic knowledge and beauty as the true determining factors in the judgement of actual works and the creative process. He concludes, 'Considering the theory of Poetic Knowledge' as such, 'one sees that it is because conceptual art, as a speculative art, does not as a requirement materialise the intentional emotion needed for the audience to have a genuine aesthetic experience and therefore identify something as an artwork, asking, 'What is it about?' A concept is static – whereas an emotion is dynamic and rooted in matter, accessible through the senses, and accessible to all' (Haynes, 2015, pp. 540-541). This bears comparison to Dorothy Sayers' theological portrayal of an imbalanced, and thus imperfect, 'idea-ridden' (conceptual) work of drama. In such a situation, the work's dynamic energy (its 'engendering' *verbum mentis*) is deficient, and the lack of poetic expression or embodiment, makes it a powerless and un-spiritualised experience. Sayers was somewhat familiar with Maritain and mentions him in *The Mind of the Maker* (Sayers, 2004), first published in 1941. (See chapters 'Idea, Energy, Power' pp. 25-36, and 'Scalene Trinities' pp. 119-144 in particular).

<sup>460</sup> The minimalist branch of modern music, developed in New York in the 1960's appears a notable example, and on Maritain's criteria, could never be termed 'free.'

‘the supreme law of expression is no longer the law of rational and logical connections ... sovereignty has shifted’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 315) to the internal. The work is unbound—a *free* form—as poetry itself becomes spiritually self-aware.

Since poetry is of the spirit and spirit is naturally reflexive, it is only fitting that, in the evolution of artistic consciousness, Poetry would eventually come to be fascinated with itself and seek to penetrate its own secrets. In the final analysis, Poetry’s evolving self-consciousness concerns the fascination it has with its own capacity for knowledge (Trapani, 2011, p. 113).

How this is interpreted in the sense of a uniquely *cognitive* ‘flash’ in the poetic knowledge of the listener (via performer), is by a congruent morphology. It is, as Galamian says, essentially re-creative. The sounds we hear represent no definite set of things, and no longer signify things as a set of objective realities. Consequently the work, be it explicit or implicit in meaning, draws the listener backwards into the ‘inner music of the intuitive pulsions of the artist’ ... and thus the listener participates ‘in poetic intuition naturally expressed by this music’ (Maritain, 1953, pp. 315-316). Accordingly, a distinct *knowing-delighting* would not exist separately to a *creative-cognitive* delight in the work. The intellect may rejoice in the presence of beauty, but it will also ‘know’ something of the way in which beauty radiates, or literally, ‘ripples’ outwards. To apprehend beauty is to apprehend motion.

Maritain attempts to detect the precise ‘dynamic charges or intuitive pulsions ... soundless, purely mental units of image and emotion’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 317) with which actual poetic examples are laden, and which are felt at identifiable points. This is unconvincing, as *my* sense of where such pulsions are felt will, by default, be different to *his*, but the intention is clear. Translating this to the reception of musical works—that is, trying to reliably indicate either ‘a simple melody of intuitive emotional charges,’ or ‘a more complex harmony’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 318) as a set of imaginal-emotional pulsions, is very perilous. We risk offering an updated *Affektenlehre*, yet another emotive-symptomatic ‘guide’ to the ‘passions’ of a work.<sup>461</sup> This would be misreading Maritain and misconstruing the work. His view is that ‘the poem is an engine to make us pass *through* or *beyond* things’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 318), the form of which differs according to whether the work is classical or modern. It echoes, more transcendently, Langer’s claim that music is not the cause or cure of feelings, but their logical expression (Langer, 1942, p. 218). Her remark, below, could just as readily apply to the performer or

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<sup>461</sup> *Affektenlehre*, or the doctrine of affections, was the belief that a work could represent single rationalised emotional states or ‘passions’ by outward audible signs. It was, essentially, an exterior imposition on the composer, who sought to bring all the elements of a work under theegis of the single affect. No single ‘theory of the affects’ existed, but from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, several theorists popularised the idea.

listener, and it outlines a synchronous, but slightly more scientific version of Maritain's 'intuitive emotional charges.'

Inward hearing usually stops short of just that determinateness of quality and duration which characterizes actual sensation. This final imagination of tone itself, as something completely decided by the whole to which it belongs, requires a special symbolic support, a highly articulate bodily gesture; overtly, this gesture is the act of producing the tone, the performer's expression of it; physiologically, it is the feeling for the tone in the muscles set to produce it, and is the symbol whereby the tone is imagined (Langer, 1953, pp. 137-138).<sup>462</sup>

Tentatively we could invite reflection on the 'units of image and emotion'—the intuitive pulsions *as we feel them*—in the concerto opening by Bartok (or any work). In the violin melody, we palpably feel the engendering 'surge' from one pulsion to the next, and we anticipate this developing through the twenty second bar, and into the main body of the movement. The intuitive performer might apprehend these pulsions as being enclosed within, and differentiated by the slurring, meticulously annotated by Bartok, and which infers certain muscular 'imaginings,' or indeed, bowing patterns.<sup>463</sup>

### ***That Which We Know And Identify With***

Where Langer uses the term *symbol*, Maritain opts for '*trans-reality*' (Maritain, 1953, p. 321). It describes (a) the internal reality grasped through and by spontaneous poetic intuition and knowledge; and (b) the reality which is actually signified and brought to the fore in the organisational structure of the work. In the modern phase especially, rational definite things and established patterns have been reorganised or replaced; but far from being an artistic 'free-for-all,' the conditions for making a work are more strenuous than formerly. The rules are 'free and contingent, depending at each moment on the *correctness of the ear*, and on the fact that each and every word, measure and period in the poem being exactly *in tune* with the *soundless music* stirred by poetic intuition within the soul' (Maritain, 1953, p. 321).<sup>464</sup>

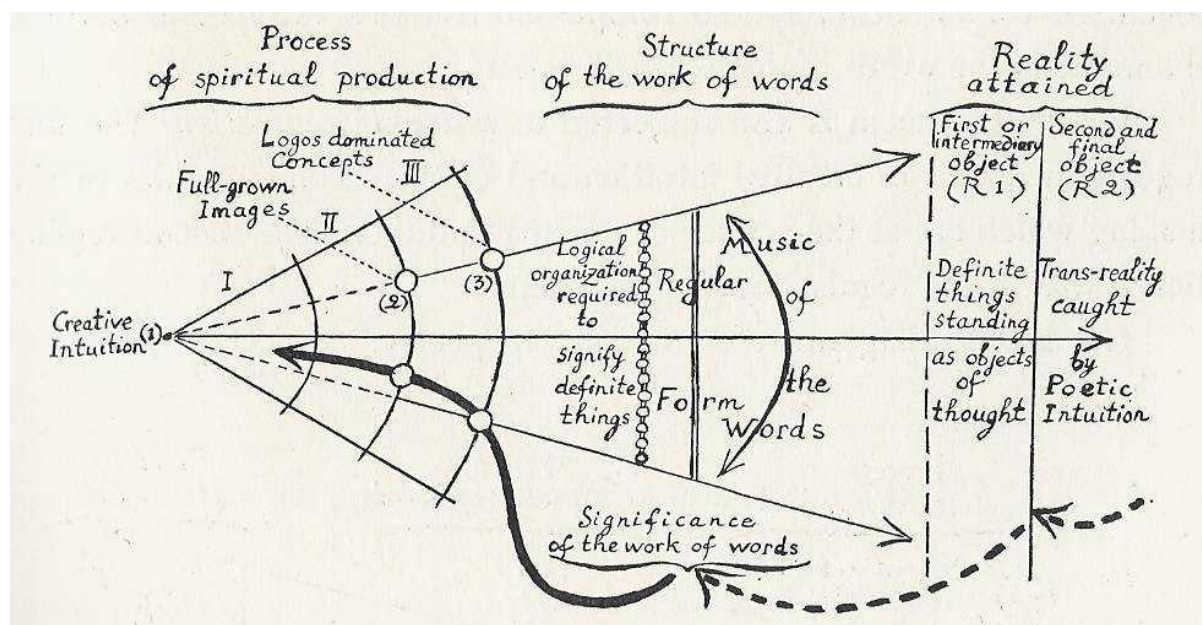
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<sup>462</sup> Bennett Reimer continually maintains that 'Langer was a major thinker who was providing an argument, never before so convincingly made, that human thinking, knowing, and understanding depended on the capacity for "symbolic transformation," and that the arts were not only to be included in that capacity, but central in it' (Reimer, 1993, p. 44).

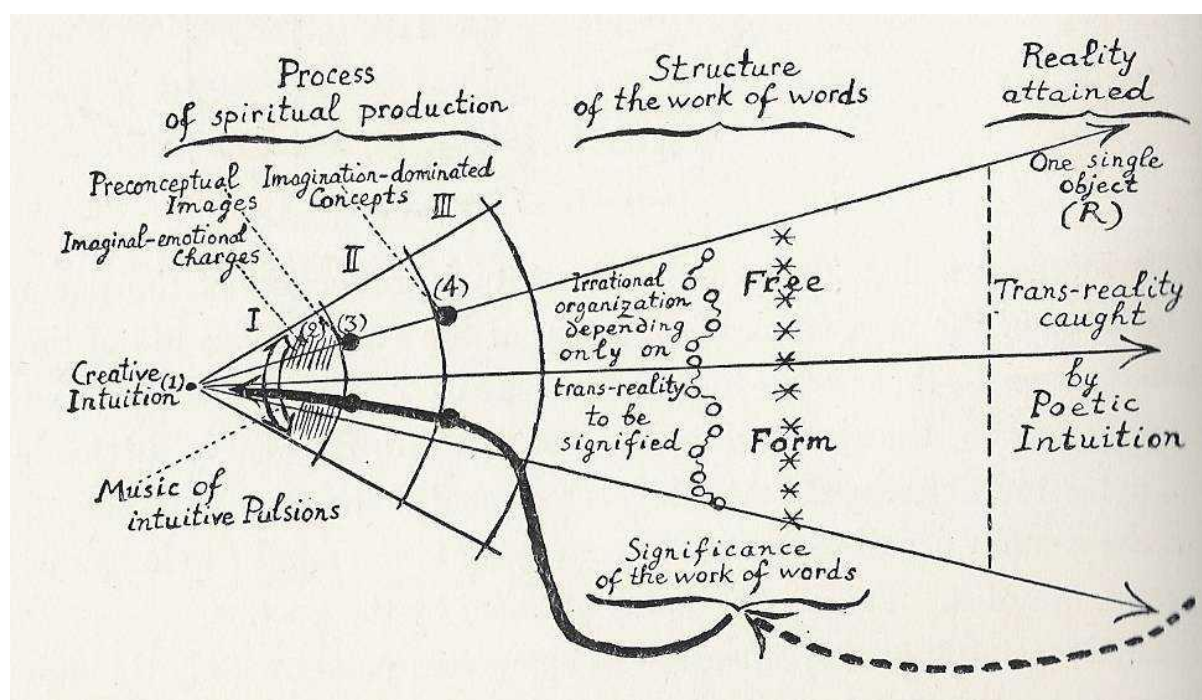
<sup>463</sup> A technical note of explanation may be needed for the theologian or philosopher. Slurring, simply explained, is a ligature which indicates the smoothest transition between two or more notes. The transition between slurs may separate distinct phrases and contours, or mark an emphasis. The violinist's bow may or may not follow the composer's indicated slurring, almost always at the performer's discretion.

<sup>464</sup> Italics added.

By now, the word 'music' is employed quite indiscriminately. Maritain has almost removed the facade of analogical usage to obliquely lay the foundations for a separate work devoted to the actual art of music. The illustrations below are fascinating in several respects, but mostly in that they resemble an auditory occurrence. Successive, expanding 'waveforms' emanate and grow outward from a single origin, with marked stages of apprehension during that growth. Noteworthy also, is the differentiation shown between classical forms, shown here (Maritain, 1953, p. 319):



and the modern, shown below (Maritain, 1953, p. 320)



By simply replacing each use of the term ‘word(s)’ with ‘musical sound(s),’ Maritain’s scheme, together with the structure and significance of the work it explains, becomes even more inexpressible and supra-rational. In highlighting the importance of ‘the music of intuitive pulsions’ passing freely into ‘the work of words, without being repressed or obliterated by the exigencies of the logos’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 321), Maritain offers a tantalising vision of a state where verbal exigencies don’t exist at all, and where the intuitive pulsions pass entirely spontaneously and unmediated into a work of musical sounds.

To dispel once and for all the notion that idealisation plays any part in Poetic Knowledge, Maritain insists on the supremacy of *image* as the true noetic determinant of all human *poesis*. In whatever mode, the use of images defines humanity; and in the way of logical, rational or conceptual thought they are used externally to provide ‘purposive comparison’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 327). But this is neither the mode of poetry, nor especially of music. Poetic intuition and poetic knowledge arises in the imagination and from the preconceptual life of the intellect—a life illuminated by the intellect. The image, in this context, is all the more powerful; for it is an image unmediated by concept, and it does not rely on comparison (setting one thing beside another in order to know). On the contrary, what is known is only revealed *through* the image of another. ‘One thing which was unknown—only contained in the obscurity of emotive intuition—is discovered, and expressed, by means of another already known, and by the same stroke their similarity is discovered’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 329). Maritain does not allude to the profound theological resonance here, nor to the clear incarnational dimension when he pronounces this form of image-beyond-metaphor as the *Immediately Illuminating Image*.

It is therefore fitting to propose that music, in virtue of its non-conceptual, supra-rational nature, leans very heavily towards the *immediately illuminating image*, and has always done so. Nor has it ever, willingly, had its unique *modus operandi* ‘beaten out of it’ by idealism,<sup>465</sup> which is why it remains so mysterious, so meaningful and so disturbingly incomprehensible. As we head towards a purposely theological end to our aesthetic of musical beauty, it is helpful

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<sup>465</sup> Maritain uses a substantial quotation from his contemporary, the American poet John Crowe Ransom (1888-1974). It is reproduced in full below, as a very illuminating view of the realist position.

“The image,” John Crowe Ransom writes, “cannot be dispossessed of a primordial freshness, which idea can never claim. An idea is derivative and tamed. The image is in the natural or wild state, and it has to be discovered there, not put there, obeying its own law and none of ours. We think we can lay hold of image and take it captive, but the docile captive is not the real image but only the idea, which is the image with its character beaten out of it.” Poetry, especially modern poetry, manages to have the image’s character *not* beaten out of it’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 325).



to get back to first things. Of the creative human person who is so cognisant of beauty, yet reliant upon image to know anything at all, Dorothy Sayers writes:

How then can he be said to resemble God? ... Had the author of *Genesis* anything particular in mind when he wrote? It is observable that in the passage leading up to the statement about man, he has given no detailed information about God. Looking at man, he sees in him something essentially divine, but when we turn back to see what he says about the original upon which the “image” of God was modelled, we find only the single assertion, “God created”. The characteristic common to God and man is apparently that: the desire and the ability to make things (Sayers, 2004, p. 17).

#### **IV- Endings: a metaphysical aesthetic of musical beauty**

The final chapter of *Creative Intuition* is tentative and exploratory. It is a highly speculative commentary, or interpretation of all that has previously been said—and Maritain is extending the reach of his Thomistic-based aesthetics to the limits. If we were expecting a profound theological climax to the text, we will be disappointed. But that is to overlook the fact that Maritain’s aim was to deliver a series of lectures on the creative process in fine art. This is exactly how *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* transpired. It has turned out to be a philosophy of beauty, the vital Thomistic constituents of which—‘radiance’ (clarity), ‘integrity,’ and ‘consonance’ (proportion)—provide fitting transcendental analogates for the ‘three epiphanies of creative intuition’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 354) which conclude the book. Unsurprisingly, these ‘epiphanies’ are musical, and they underscore the need to describe ‘how’ music means, not ‘what’ music means.<sup>466</sup>

The first—the *Poetic Sense or Inner Melody* has already been thoroughly expounded. We will not add more, except to underline its primitive existence and absolute primacy in the determination of beauty in music. Scrutiny of the poetic sense and poetic knowledge has allowed us to talk about music in a deeply ontological way, and to understand that in the beginning, the sounds of musical creation are largely virtual and imaginal.

The second—the *Action and Theme* is a response to a constant question. What are the essentials of the poetic work? Maritain, with Lourié, earlier stated that the *theme* of a work is ‘a melody at a secondary stage of its development’ and embodied in the musical action (Maritain, 1953, p. 253). This was indeed written with actual melody in mind, as distinct from

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<sup>466</sup> We can only mention the tendency to describe human creative action in three modes. Sayers’ trinitarian analogy of ‘Idea, Energy’ and ‘Power’ in the art of drama (Sayers, 2004), or Santayana’s notion of ‘Form, Matter’ and ‘Expression’ (Santayana, 1955), are two examples contemporaneous with Maritain.

the poetic sense of the word. There, Maritain went no further in defining *theme*, but now he does, some two hundred pages later. The magnitude of his inquiry takes us back to Thomistic basics with some metaphysical analogies.

Action is the marker of any artistic work. It is the property of the work, and it characterises *how* the work *is*, not what the work represents. It is ‘the changing life of the psyche as projected in a certain direction ... ‘the spiritual élan or motion.’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 357). Action propels forward. Events develop in a timely manner, compelled by this action, and the whole situation is invested with meaning. Maritain observes that the property of action can be *transitive*, in that one thing modifies another; or *immanent*, in which ‘a living agent perfects its own being’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 358). In both respects, action is ‘an emergent or terminative act, or a superabundance of existence, through which being asserts itself beyond substantial existence. For things are and exist before acting (Maritain, 1953, p. 358). Action, as occurring post-existence, is always an *actus secundus* (only in God is action, essence and existence united).

Imagine the composer, performer and listener in such metaphysical ways—being both ‘modified’ and ‘modifying’ through motion and emotion. The idea for instance, that the music of J.S. Bach matchlessly embodies the transitive and immanent dimension—expressing ‘not just what our feelings sound like,’ or ‘ought to sound like,’ or ‘would sound like’ (Chappell, 2021, Ch. 5.7), but actually *how* they transpire as we become more ‘perfected’ participants in the music’s thematic action. Our final musical reflection will say more of this.

Through the action comes the *theme*, which is ‘the ultimate fruit of intelligibility’ and the *significance* of the action. It is truly melody at its secondary stage of development. It unfolds, in real sound as an *actus secundus*. Because the theme is the result of action, it cannot exist but for action—it is the meaning of action, and like the action from which it is derived, it ‘presupposes the poetic sense, and originates in the creative intuition (Maritain, 1953, p. 360). Melody construed this way (as theme) has a powerful and unique epistemological part to play in the transmission process. In conveying poetic knowledge from its original condition (that is, an amalgam of things and self, born in the preconscious intellect), melody brings that knowledge to ‘a more stable, universal state,’ in which creative emotion losing its original state, objectivizes itself in some respect’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 360). In other words, the melody – the theme – has fully materialised and the work has attained its significant meaning.

The manner in which significance is attained wholly through sound is nothing short of miraculous, and frankly, mysterious. If melody is so closely related to the *theme* of a work as

we have described, then melody is far more than just ‘a tune.’ We have already sensed this in our discussions of musical beauty in antiquity, ecclesial contexts, and in the testimony of composers. In all cases, a melody carried a level of significance which far exceeded the particulars of the notes; and listeners in former ages were far more ‘attuned’ to this than are we. Following Maritain’s train of thought, a melodic theme which *only* consists of certain particulars strung together, but without originating in creative emotion, is devoid of poetic existence. It will nonetheless be conveyed, but the work will be shallow and anodyne at best, or just awful at worst.<sup>467</sup>

The third ‘epiphany’—*Number or Harmonic Expansion* concerns the way in which the poetic sense and the thematic action (the first two ‘epiphanies’) are ‘complemented or externally reflected in the same way ... as in the things of nature substance is extended by quality’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 364). It involves development and progression, and it echoes Augustine’s *De musica* in probing the manner in which sounds arise, are transmitted and received. ‘Number’—Maritain even employs the word, and in a not dissimilar way to Augustine. ‘Number’ or ‘harmonic expansion’ is a quality that draws individual parts together, making them ever more truthfully known, and is the most fully materialised and sensorially perceivable disclosure of creative intuition.

The unity required of an orchestra to animate the wholeness of a work is a suitable illustration. What is crucial is balance, relationship, and the unification of diverse parts and resources: proportion, congruence, and the knowledge of these in the perceiver (composer, performer or listener). It can be thought of as the reflection of the poetic sense and the theme in auditory experience. Once more, Maritain summons an ancient metaphysical significance from the vocabulary he uses—especially the voice of Augustine.<sup>468</sup>

It is through number and harmonic expansion that the work is possessed of a kind of external music. For to the extent to which it has number, its visible or sonorous qualities, its impact on the senses and power of delighting them, its own charge of sensitivity and sensuousness are penetrated with the secret measures of reason and logic (Maritain, 1953, p. 364).

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<sup>467</sup> Langer is reputed to have said that in musical apprehension, “the ‘Ship of Theseus’ is always being rebuilt whilst at sea.” We are unable find the source to reference, but the meaning is hugely applicable. The Poetic Sense or Inner melody must endure above everything, because it derives everything.

<sup>468</sup> Burnett highlights the theological import of Augustine’s conception of number. ‘The contemplation of number became one of the highest goals of the human pursuit of intellect and reason which seeks an apprehension of the order of the divine. Number has further significance: if all things can be explained through the presence of number, both their aesthetic characteristics and their constituent reality, then it is through number that God created tangible reality’ (Burnett, 2011, p. 5).

The work's 'sonorous qualities,' its 'impact on the senses' and the delight it procures, are in direct proportion to the degree of possession of number. Aesthetic beauty, as is stated, inheres to number. Augustine, emphasising its transcendent origin and operation, states 'number also begins [emanates] from one, and is beautiful in equality and likeness, and bound by order' (Augustine, 2002, pp. 375-376). From whichever perspective—the aesthetic or the transcendental—beauty irradiates when things correctly coincide: when the well-proportioned mind meets well-proportioned sound. This, in essence, was the truth that the chant *Deus creator omnium*, properly conceived (after much intense discussion between Augustine and his disciple), could, should, would, and did express.<sup>469</sup>

### V – 'Beauty does as beauty is'

What the three 'epiphanies' of creative intuition have shown is that there is an objective virtuality contained in poetic knowledge from the beginning. If this were not the case, nothing would be graspable by the poetic sense, and nothing mentally conceivable. Maritain's deep foray into the subjective, emotive sphere of artistic creation never loses sight of the realist agenda. 'Poetic intuition passes into the work through the instrumentality of the *action* and the *theme*, and through the instrumentality of *number* or *harmonic expansion*,' (Dougherty, 2003, p. 90). It has reacquired its conceptual and intellective shape: its formed logos. There is an objective actuality to the work perceived because there is an objective reality to beauty.

Each of the three epiphanies of creative intuition—the poetic sense or inner melody, the action or theme, and the number or harmonic expansion—are allocated a property of beauty itself. Maritain was doubtless heading for this conclusion, although he offers it entirely personally; we are free to doubt. The *poetic sense* is the radiance (clarity) of the work—it is 'the absolutely prime property of beauty and matters first of all' (Maritain, 1953, p. 370). Integrity resides in the *theme* of the work; and *consonance* (proportion) in the work's expansion. 'Poetry,' says Maritain, recalling his first comments in the book, 'is the free creativity of the spirit, and the intuitive knowledge through emotion, which transcend and permeate all the arts, inasmuch as they tend toward beauty as an end beyond the end' (Maritain, 1953, p. 393).

Maritain offers one last, and long meditation on a poetic artist: Dante. It is fitting, therefore, to meditate again (but briefly) on the musical personification of the Maritainian *artifex*. The

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<sup>469</sup> See chapter *Musical Beauty, God and the Church: Historical-Ecclesiological Contexts*. The chant in question provides the starting and end point of Augustine's dialogue in *De musica*. It is his 'musical example.'

quotation below is Maritain's response to a published criticism of *Art and Scholasticism*. It appears as an appendix in only the final (1935) edition and translation. It is vastly revealing.

Would there be any point now in explaining that if Mr. Belgion had formed an accurate idea of what I conceive beauty to be, and what I meant by speaking of the *analogical* character of beauty, he would not be astonished that in my view there are for beauty, in art as well as in nature, very different ways in which it may be realised? He would understand that the religious values inherent in the tragedies of Aeschylus or in the Passions of Bach are precisely for me integral parts of the beauty peculiar to these works; and also that the intuition which begets aesthetic joy is indeed human and in no way angelic, since it comes to the mind through the medium of the senses (Maritain, 1962, p. 114).

***A 'Sarabande' of Religious Beauty* (Ex. 9, in Appendix. 1)**

I have chosen an aria near the end of the St. John Passion (BWV 245) which profoundly displays the integration and unity of artistic, aesthetic, and religious value of which Maritain speaks, and this reflection aims more at a 'theological-aesthetic' analysis than a musicological one. 'Zerfließe, mein Hertze' draws the crucifixion section of the St. John Passion to a close, just prior to Christ's removal from the cross. The text expresses the bleakness of the event, stressing 'a tragedy beyond imagining, beyond suffering that we can humanly picture or experience' (Bloom, 2003, p. 123). It should be only expressible in heartrending, pathos-drenched sentiment. A picture of hopelessness, despair and finality: 'Dein Jesus ist tot.'<sup>470</sup>

What might we expect of the music? Famous examples come to mind. 'Piangero La Sorte Mia,'—Cleopatra's song of sorrow, bitterness and anger in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*. Dido's lament 'When I am laid in Earth'—where Purcell draws on every trick in the musical pathos toolkit. Both 'name' sorrow quite openly in their actual notes—almost romanticised musical 'Pieta.'<sup>471</sup> The opening text of 'Zerfließe,' "Dissolve, my heart, in floods of tears," echoes a particularly lachrymal outpouring from the Psalmist, as he contemplates mortal life and the condition of his soul: 'I have laboured in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears (Psalms, 6:7).'<sup>472</sup> The expectations on Bach are high.

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<sup>470</sup> The text is translated "Dissolve, my heart, in floods of tears to honour the Almighty! Tell the world and heaven your distress: Your Jesus is dead!" (Translation from Rathey, 2016, p. 99). The influence of the German poet B.H. Brockes is also evident in Bach's approach to the text. Brockes produced an influential and popular Passion oratorio text, set many times, including by Telemann and Handel.

<sup>471</sup> As Bernstein explained to his young audience: 'But there are other feelings so deep and special that we have no words for them, and that's where music is especially marvellous. It names the feelings for us, only in notes instead of words. It's all in the way music moves. We must never forget that music is movement ...' (Bernstein, 2005, p. 28).

<sup>472</sup> In the Douai-Rheims text. The first verse of the chapter, 'Unto the end, in verses, a psalm for David, for the octave,' incorporates the instruction that the Psalm should be sung on an eight-stringed instrument,

Whilst the text speaks of hopelessness, the music itself does not. The aria is far more restrained and elegant than might be expected. Poignancy and pathos are apprehended in a quiet, introverted way, and through the musical setting Bach sets up a striking contrast with the text. But the text, as Eric Chafe observes, already subtly ‘interprets the believer’s tears as honouring Jesus’—a thought-provoking juxtaposition—and that ‘this aspect of Bach’s St. John Passion text, centred on opposition, is its most characteristic and remarkable quality’ (Chafe, 2014, p. 151). That the music identifies such affective subtleness, then expands, animates and conveys it in a thoroughly ‘un-cathartic’ way, is more remarkable still.

The choice of two wind instruments—the transverse flute and the oboe da caccia (hunting oboe), along with the organ and basso continuo lend an instrumental sonority of almost expressionless purity to accompany the soprano voice. The sound is devoid of sentimentality. The modest tempo, the triple metre; the insistent pulse of the continuo and the constantly moving textures of the instruments and voice all coalesce. There is much going on and the music is busy. If we had listened to the instrumental opening before the soprano entry (perhaps with harpsichord instead of organ), we could easily mistake this music for a Concerto Grosso movement, or a graceful Sarabande, and not the music of grief.

Bach’s major musical concerns revolved around harmonic forms and the building of thematic material from within a logical, though never facile, chordal architecture. ‘Zerfließe’ is no exception—nothing disturbs its rational progress or harmonious balance between parts, the dialogue between which is conversational. The melody itself is quite angular and is not excessively ‘dramatised’ with long syllabic melisma or ‘weeping’ appoggiatura. On the contrary, the notes of longest duration are set to the word ‘Höchsten’ (Almighty or Supreme), and the most repeated word is ‘dead’ or ‘slain’ (granted this is always set as two descending pitches)—Bach’s only concession to a ‘lachrymal’ melodic motif. Overall, the ‘emotive resonance’ of the music is apparently contrasted to that of the words. The text may be mostly ‘heart-on-sleeve’ pathos but the music really is not.

As Maritain feared ‘to lay a parricidal hand on the greatest of musicians’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 401), so equally in what follows—which is given solely to illustrate the extent of that greatness, and the music’s supra-rationality. The opening text of ‘Zerfließe, mein Herze’ could workably be set to the opening melody of the Sarabande from the French Overture (BWV 831)—one of

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symbolising the last resurrection and the ‘eighth day’ after the seven days of mortal life. Other Hebrew musical directions include ‘to the choirmaster with stringed instruments.’ (see McLarney, 2014, p. 44).

Bach's more intense keyboard Sarabandes. 'Music is neither the cause of nor the cure of feelings but their logical expression' (Langer, 1942, p. 218) has never felt so apt as it does in the works of Bach.



George Steiner has suggested that whilst the Passion of Christ is 'an event of unspeakable grief, it is also a cipher through which is revealed the love of God for man,' and 'that real tragedy can only occur where the tormented soul believes that there is no time left for God's forgiveness' (Steiner, 2010, p. 331-332). Others debate the harmonious balance and integrity between all the particulars of Bach's work, questioning whether a middle-ground situation, between Bach as 'pure musician' and Bach as 'pure theologian' (Plantinga, 2011, p. 215) is a valid interpretation. I do not think Maritain would be persuaded by any of this.

Holding the aforementioned positions is to understate the weight of tragedy, and the mystery of the death of Christ. 'His soul, without being separated from God, is torn out of his body, while both his soul and his flesh remain united with the Godhead' (Bloom, 2003, p. 123). This is the solemn 'religious value' (Maritain, 1962, p. 114) which the music conveys. It is also to underplay the role of music as belonging to the aesthetic, beautiful, sensory, core of knowledge (theological or otherwise). I want to know and understand tragedy—at least as far as mystery and music permit.

And Bach as musician-theologian hybrid? This is not congenial to the aesthetic delight we feel—it does not leave distinct what is distinct. Bach the theologian can only cooperate on equal terms with Bach the musician because prudence and the artistic habitus remain identifiably separate—each, in their own way, aiming at perfection. Taking the middle ground vitiates the fertile abundance and unity of Bach's creative output, which, as Marissen (1995, pp. 111-120) suggests, was just as equally 'religious' in the purely instrumental works. 'Bach seems to be saying that God not only wants there to be music in service of the Church, but also that musical hierarchies are part of the God-ordained order of things in this world' (Marissen, 1995, p. 114). Augustine, Aquinas and Maritain would surely concur.

With Maritain, I submit, that the deepest tragedy could only be truthfully imaged via the highest purity of formal representation—music shorn of all superfluous elements. Only the most

‘ontological’ composer could ever truthfully express the emotive significance—the *immediately illuminating image* and the *theme* of the Passion of Christ; and of course, the aim of an aria is to deliver a significant emotion in response to a significant event. In ‘Zerfließe, mein Herze,’ Bach has somehow extracted the pure essence of tragedy—the work of a supreme artisan and the virtue of art at its apex. Despite the fact that Bach was a Lutheran, he should, in spirit, be considered a Thomist!

Into Bach (like Dante) flowed all high art, and out flowed a distinctive Christian culture. Perhaps he understood that a millennium of Christian music was coming to an end in his work, that perfect blend of passion and intellect. His calling, whether in court or church, was to a metaphysics of art. He wrote for God’s ears and his own ... (Heinz, 2010, p. 143).

‘For God’s ears and our own’ was the conclusion reached by all the Patristic saints who contemplated melody, and it is why for Maritain ‘the music of Bach prays with a great vocal prayer that is elevated to the contemplation which theology calls ‘acquired contemplation ...’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 401). Perhaps also, in such rare cases, pure *knowing-delighting*, rich in mystery, and empty of concepts, is allowable.

### ***The ‘Nonconceptual’ and the ‘Nonconceptualizable’ – The Matter Resolved?***

Has Maritain refuted abstractive, conceptual knowledge—at least in the Thomistically-approved sense? I do not believe this is what he ultimately claims. Heath (1954), in the first published critique of *Creative Intuition* to which we earlier referred, did not scrutinise the text or the development of Maritain’s thesis closely enough. Like the rest of us, Maritain remains confined to verbal exposition to try and account for a verbally indescribable experience, and as *Creative Intuition* progresses, he attempts to probe ever deeper into the recesses of subjective, human poetic experience, always seeking for a higher, purer, more lucid and conceptual-less explanation of knowledge. Language is stretched to the limit, but whether he reaches the point of ‘non-concept’ in describing the poetic experience, is not definitive. What is certain is that Maritain never denies aesthetic experience the name of knowledge.

Only at a late stage, and apparently set against the whole flow of his argument, Maritain mentions, only once, that the total exclusion of concepts is a mistake, because the intellect cannot do without them. There can be ‘concepts in a nascent state, and virtual, as it were, carried along by the images; or implicit, unapparent concepts, serving only as supports for the expression of images; or concepts which are explicit and used with their full intellectual meaning’ (Maritain, 1953, p. 323). His point is that whichever way you look at it, concepts



remain ‘no longer masters’ but subservient to poetic intuition. This moderating statement makes it hard to categorically reject the involvement of conceptual thought in the aesthetic experience, but it rightly restores an intuitive and divinatory species of knowledge in the truthful apprehension of beauty.

The explanation of concepts just given above astutely furnishes the panoply of arts, ranging from those which have historically tended towards idealism of the real (or naturalism), to music, which is oriented to the nascent, virtual and imaginal. Sean Sullivan concludes his assessment of *Creative Intuition* by noting that ‘while Maritain does not make mention of Aristotle’s observation’ that music imitates moral habits or states of feeling, ‘he has not overlooked the fact that music, by reason of its corresponding-to-feeling nature, provides his theory with strong support in a manner of factual evidence’ (Sullivan, 1964, p. 126).

The experience of the composer is for Maritain, then, the creative experience *par excellence*; and music is fine art *par excellence* in consequence of which we can suppose that Maritain would agree with the oft-quoted statement ... “all art aspires to the condition of music” (Sullivan, 1964, p. 126).

### ***Towards The End Beyond The End***

In the course of this inquiry we have juxtaposed Maritain’s philosophy of the creative process with others who have discovered musical beauty to be problematic, enigmatic, solvable and unsolvable. It has not necessarily been an exclusively Thomistic enterprise. Schopenhauer was simultaneously perceptive (often brilliantly) and ultimately mistaken about *how* music *means*. Nowhere better than in his account do we see a partition erected between the universally-felt emotive power of music—its real beauty, and an idealised, analogous (sometimes brilliant) explanation of its elemental components. To put it crudely (and a little unfairly), we should, on Schopenhauer’s terms, manifest an increasingly pure and direct picture of the will by simply playing up a six-octave C major scale (and be no closer to God at the top). Nietzsche was straightforwardly mistaken. It was not through the will’s domination, or through the projection of a quasi-religious, mythological concept that musical beauty would ever be apprehended.

In Maritain’s own time, Susanne Langer drew conclusions that are sophisticated but incomplete. Music is more than an ‘unconsummated symbol’—merely a presentational sign, or ‘myth of the inner life’ (Langer, 1942, p. 245). In *Mind: An Essay in Human Feeling* (Langer, 1970), her final work, she had no means left at her disposal other than to gravitate towards post-evolutionary, wholly psychological portrayals of the aesthetic experience. Deprived of the transcendental genesis and fulfilment of beauty, Langer’s account is about as good as any that

followed it; and as we noted, the unrealised theological potential of her theory has attracted some attention.

Our inquiry has been mostly Thomistic in character and method—in the progressive spirit of Maritain. We have attempted to demonstrate that a philosophy of music after Aquinas is possible, although this is only a beginning and there is much to be accomplished. We have shown that Aquinas’s famous designation of beauty, *id quod visum placent*, is at once simple and irritatingly vague, elegant, yet undefined. It is intended, in passing, to provide only the essentials of beauty and not the particulars, and neither does it address beauty as a separate line of inquiry. It is a ‘matter of fact’ statement about one’s cognitive reaction to a pleasing thing. As I have shown, and as Aquinas confirms, the description is fully applicable to the auditory sense and should be applied as such—for music ‘ministers to reason’ (ST. I-II, q. 27, a. 1, ad. 3). But still, this does not do justice to the definition, nor does it fully satisfy. The present chapter opened with a personal, individualised account of the auditory aesthetic experience, and this thesis has ventured to give a reasoned explanation for such a sense of musical beauty. To reduce this to a maxim of such brevity—‘that’s all there is to it’—as Bernstein does, really leaves the matter unresolved.

However, when read as his concluding remark to the article ‘Whether Good is the Only Cause of Love’ (ST. I-II, q. 27, a. 1), and interpreted in light of the article’s wider discussion, it becomes clear that St. Thomas construes the notion of beauty as the ‘hallmark’ of the notion of the good—which of itself is defined as ‘the proper cause of love.’ There is a sophisticated triangularity to the article’s argument, the apex of which—‘love’—is consequently identified as the truest sign and mediator of the beautiful. Contained, then, in an apparently brief and general remark about beauty or pleasure, is an extraordinarily high assessment of delightful apprehension. Let us finally expand.

With St. Augustine, Aquinas shows why the cause of love is the truly good, and not just an incidental or secondary good ‘in some respect.’ (Playing the piano benefits a child’s fine motor skills is a secondary good, and implies no love or desire). Aquinas states decisively that the good and the beautiful are identical, for ‘they differ in aspect only’ (I-II, q. 27, a. 1, ad. 3), therefore convertibility is a given, and beauty, at the very least is contained within the good as a transcendental. But it is more than that. Maritain believes that the beautiful also acts pre-eminently; engendering a cognitive ‘flash’ of apprehension which enfolds, illuminates and vivifies all that is good and true. St. Thomas concurs. For pleasure—that which is pleasing

when heard, is experienced most truly and at its most good, as pertaining to an object of love. There must exist a certain *connaturality* ‘of the lover for the thing beloved,’ and in this respect, knowledge and understanding are vastly implicated.

It is no coincidence that Aquinas’s last words of the first article to question twenty seven, ‘the beautiful is something pleasant to apprehend,’ leads on to the subject of the second article, *Whether Knowledge is a Cause of love.*’ (ST. I-II, q. 27, a. 2). For Maritain, interpreting Aquinas has involved a herculean effort to maintain the boundaries between the virtues distinctive to art, and those idiosyncratic to the moral life. The distinction between aesthetic and transcendental beauty has also been nobly preserved. But Maritain’s message is that under certain conditions, art and prudence (for instance), or the human sense of beauty and its divine analogate, draw especially close. We have outlined that music provides a uniquely suitable, contemplative medium for those conditions to be met. How one knows is crucial; and the purer, more cognitive flashes of delight do indeed inhere to an especially contemplative mode of reception—Poetic Knowledge itself.

The Contemplative, who looks at the highest cause on which every being and activity depend, knows the place and the value of art, and understands the Artist. The Artist in his turn divines the grandeur of the Contemplative, and feels congenial with him. When his path crosses the Contemplative’s, he will recognize love and beauty (Maritain, 1960, Ch. 1, sec. 4).

Artists, then, cannot escape God. If they turn inwardly, into the subjective dynamics of poetic knowledge, they turn, as in Augustine, toward God. At its deepest level the human subject can imitate God by loving things into existence. If artists look outwardly, at the beauty of their work or of the world, this beauty is itself, a glimpse of God. As in Aquinas, all created effects speak loudly to the human mind of their Cause (Hudson, 1987, p. 255).

There is then, one great single theme that binds together our inquiry into the origins and nature of musical beauty: one ‘divine’ thread stretching from St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas and Jacques Maritain. A philosophy of music which neither eschews metaphysics, nor turns knowledge from its theological, transcendent origin and orientation, must reach one certain conclusion about the end of musical expression and experience. ‘Musical understanding in the final analysis is consummated in love’ (Phenix, 1964, p. 151). But this is the start of another separate, special analysis.

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## Appendix 1 – Musical Examples

1. Elgar, Symphony No. 1, Op. 55 – opening
2. Schumann, Warum? from Fantasiestücke, Op. 12
3. Debussy, La Cathédrale Engloutie – opening
4. Schoenberg, Verklärte Nacht – Letter 'H'
5. Messiaen, Louange à L'Éternité de Jésus – opening
6. Schumann, Des Abends, from Fantasiestücke, Op. 12
7. Bach, Sarabande, from French Suite no. 5 in G, BWV. 816
8. Bartok, Violin Concerto No. 2 – opening
9. Bach, Zerfließe Mein Hertze, from St. John Passion, BWV. 245

**Ex. 1, Elgar, Symphony No. 1, Op. 55 – opening**

**I. Andante. Nobilmente e semplice. ♩. 72.**

**1**

Flauto 1 *p dolce* *ppp*

Flauto 2 *p*

(e Piccolo) 3 *p*

Oboe 1 2

Corno inglese

Clarinetto (B♭) 1 2 *p dolce* *ppp*

Clarinetto basso (B♭)

Fagotto 1 2 *p dolce* *ppp*

Contrafagotto

Corno 1 2 3 4

Tromba (B♭) 1 2 3

Trombone 1 2 3

Tuba

Timpani *pp*

Arpa 1, 2

**Andante. Nobilmente e semplice. ♩. 72.**

**1**

Violino I *p* *ppp*

Violino II *p* *ppp*

Viola *div.* *p* *ppp*

Violoncello *pp* *p* *ppp*

Contrabbasso *pp* *p* *ppp*

2

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Oboe

Clarinet in B-flat

Bassoon

Contrabassoon

Cor Anglais

Trumpet

Trombone

Tuba

Timpani

Arpeggiator

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

*mf espress.*

*p*

*pp*

*con sord. pp*

*espress.*

*p*

*pp*

*con sord.*

2

This page of a musical score, likely for a symphony, features a variety of instruments. The top section includes Flutes (Fl.), Oboes (Ob.), Clarinets in B-flat (Cl. B.), Bassoons (Fag.), and Contrabassoons (C. Fag.). Below these are the Horns (Ger.), Trumpets (Tr.), Trombones (Tbn.), and Timpani (Timp.). The bottom section includes the Arpa (Harp), Violins I (Vla. I), Violins II (Vla. II), Viola (Vla. III), Violoncello (Vcl.), and Contrabass (C. B.).

The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. It includes various dynamic markings such as *dim.* (diminuendo), *ff* (fortissimo), *p* (piano), and *pp* (pianissimo). Performance instructions like *simile* and *molto sost.* (molto sostenuto) are also present. The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing multiple staves for different parts of the same instrument or for different sections of the orchestra.

**Ex. 2, Schumann, Warum? from Fantasiestücke, Op. 12**

*Langsam und zart.*

9

17

26

34



**Ex. 3, Debussy, La Cathedrale Engloutie – opening**

Profondément calme [♩ = 58]  
*dans une brume doucement sonore*

*pp*

*doux et fluide*

*pp* sans nuances



## Ex. 4, Schoenberg, Verklärte Nacht – Letter 'H'

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece, identified as Ex. 4, Schoenberg, Verklärte Nacht – Letter 'H'. The score is written for a four-staff instrument, likely a piano, and is organized into three systems of two staves each. The notation is in a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a 3/4 time signature. The score begins with a treble clef and a key signature change to one flat. The first system includes dynamic markings such as *pp* (pianissimo) and *ppp* (pianississimo). The second system continues the melodic and harmonic development. The third system features a *f* (forte) marking and the instruction "ohne Dämpfer." (without damper). The score concludes with a *ff* (fortissimo) marking and the instruction "steigernd" (increasingly), which is repeated multiple times across the final measures. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

Ex. 5, Messiaen, Louange à L'Éternité de Jésus – opening

The musical score is for the opening of 'Louange à L'Éternité de Jésus' by Olivier Messiaen. It is written for Violoncelle, Piano, and Voix. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Infiniment lent, extatique (♩=44 env.)'. The Violoncelle part begins with a melodic line marked 'p majestueux, recueilli, très expressif'. The Piano part features a dense, rhythmic accompaniment in the right hand and a more active line in the left hand, marked 'p'. The Voix part enters with a melodic line. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'p' and 'cresc.', and performance instructions like 'etc.' and 'cresc.'.

**Violoncelle**

Infiniment lent, extatique (♩=44 env.)

*p* majestueux, recueilli, très expressif

**Piano**

Infiniment lent, extatique (♩=44 env.)

*p*

**Voix**

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*etc.*

velle (a réele)

dim.

*f* *dim.*

velle

*p* *cresc.*

*p* *cresc.*

velle

*f*

*f*

velle

*p* *cresc.* *f* *cresc.*

*p* *cresc.* *f* *cresc.*

**Ex. 6, Schumann, Des Abends, from Fantasiestücke, Op. 12**

Sehr innig zu spielen. Componirt 1847.

7 *Pedal*

14 17

21 *rit.*

27

F. Schott & Co. Mainz, 1847. 30. Ausgegeben 1849.

The musical score consists of seven systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) for the first three systems, changes to D major (two sharps) in the fourth system, and returns to B-flat major in the sixth system. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Dynamic markings include *p* (piano) at the beginning of the first system, *p\** (piano) at the beginning of the third system, and *rit.* (ritardando) at the end of the fourth system and at the beginning of the seventh system. A key signature change is indicated by a double bar line and a key signature change symbol in the fourth system.

**Ex. 7, Bach, Sarabande, from French Suite no. 5 in G, BWV. 816**







## Ex. 8, Bartok, Violin Concerto No. 2 – opening

Allegro non troppo,  $\text{♩} = 100$

Flutes I, II

Oboes I, II

Clarinets I, II  
in A

Bassoons I, II

I, III  
Horns in F

II, IV

Trumpets I, II  
in C

Trombones  
I, II, III

Timpani

Percussion

Celesta

Harp

Allegro non troppo,  $\text{♩} = 100$

Solo Violin

Violins I

Violins II

Violas

Violoncellos

Double Basses

*pp*

*pizz.*  
*p*

*pizz.*  
*p*

*pizz.*  
*p*

*p*



2

11

Clt. I, II in A

Bsn. I

Hr. I in F

Timp.

Harp

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

D. B.

*p*

*arco div.*

*arco*

*p*

15

Obs. I, II

Clt. I, II in A

Bsns. I, II

Timp.

Harp

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

D. B.

*mp*

*mp*

B. &amp; H. 9003

Fl. I

Obs. I, II

Clto. I, II  
in A

Bsns. I, II

Timp.

Harp

S. Vio.

Vias. I

Vias. II

Vla.

Vcl.

D. Bs.

poco allarg. . .

p

10

pizz.

arco

51"

22

a tempo (mosso), ♩ = 112 - 108

S. Vio.

Vias. I

Vias. II

Vla.

Vcl.

D. Bs.

pizz.

p

**Ex. 9, Bach, Zerfließe Mein Hertze, from St. John Passion, BWV. 245**

*Molt' adagio*

Flauto traverso solo <sup>co</sup>

Oboe da caccia solo <sup>co</sup>

Soprano

Continuo  
senza Basso grosso

5

11

16

*p*

*p*

Zer - flie - ße, mein Her - ze, in Flu - ten der Zäh - ren,

*p*

22

zer - flie - ße, mein Her - ze, in Flu - ten der

28

Zäh - ren, in Flu - ten der Zäh - ren dem

33

Höch - sten, dem Höch - sten zu

38

Eh - ren, zer - flie - ße, mein Her - ze, in

43

Flu - ten - der Zähl - ren dem Höch - sten zu

48

Eh - ren!

53

58

Er - zähl - le - der Welt und dem Him - mel die Not, er -



63

zäh - le der Welt und dem Him - mel die Not: Dein Je - sus, dein

69

Je - sus ist tot, dein Je - sus, dein Je - sus ist tot,

75

dein Je - sus ist -

80

tot, tot, tot, dein Je - sus ist tot,

85

tot —, dein — Je - sus ist tot!

90

95

Zer - flie - ße —, mein Her - ze, in Flu - ten der Zäh - ren,

101

zer - flie - ße —, mein Her - ze, in Flu - ten der

106

Zäh - - - ren, in Flu - ten der Zäh - - - ren dem

111

Höch - - - sten, dem Höch - - - sten zu

116

Eh - ren; zer - flie - ße, mein Her - ze, in - - Flu - ten der

122

Zäh - ren dem Höch - sten zu Eh - ren!